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**CACIQUISMO IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY  
MEXICO: THE CASE OF  
GABRIEL BARRIOS CABRERA IN THE SIERRA  
NORTE DE PUEBLA**

**BY**

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## SUMMARY

This thesis focuses upon the cacicazgo of Gabriel Barrios Cabrera, in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico during the 1920s. It seeks to analysis the extent to which previously identified trends in post-revolutionary regional politics can be applied to this isolated mountainous region.

Conclusions are based upon evidence obtained from national, state, municipal, and private archives in Mexico. In addition, a programme of oral history was conducted within the Sierra de Puebla.

The study is divided into six main components, each representing a significant aspect of Barrios' cacicazgo. These comprise: local historical precedents of Indian leadership and co-operation with non-Indian politicians; the range of responsibilities and opportunities that Barrios enjoyed in his pivotal role as a federal military officer under Carrancista and Sonorense administrations; the nature of his grass-roots support, his use of *cuerpos voluntarios* and patronage of municipal officials; Barrios' political affiliations beyond the Sierra and his struggle for political supremacy within the Sierra; the nature and motives of the cacique's regional development initiatives, and an analysis of the contradiction of his apparent pro-campesino, yet anti-agrarian, stance; a case study of the district of Zacapoaxtla, which demonstrates the importance of local factionalism and portrays the practical application of the Barrios cacicazgo at the most local level.

After identifying the causes of Barrios' fall from grace in 1930, the thesis concludes by arguing that caciquismo in the Sierra de Puebla was essentially different from models of regional power-broking found elsewhere in post-revolutionary Mexico. While similarities existed, Barrios' style of leadership displayed more of a consistency with local conditions and precedents than any broader ideological tendencies. Continued research at the local level is essential if we are to obtain a clearer understanding of the diversity of experiences endured by Mexicans in the aftermath of revolution.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Archival

#### *Mexico City*

AGN	Archivo General de la Nación
ADN	Archivo Histórico de la Defensa Nacional
AHUNAM/JB	Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, J. Barragán
AHUNAM/JBT	Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Jacinto B. Treviño
ARE	Archivo de Relaciones Exteriores
AVC	Archivo de Venustiano Carranza, Instituto de Estudios Históricos de México, Condomex S.A.
BVLT	Biblioteca Vicente Lombardo Toledano
FAC y T	Fideicomiso Plutarco Elías Calles y Fernando Torreblanca
Hem Nac	Hemeroteca Nacional, Universidad Nacional Autónoma México
RDS	Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Mexico, Ref. No. MP 1370, Colegio de México

#### *State of Puebla*

ACP	Archivo del Congreso del Estado de Puebla
AGP	Archivo General de Notarías del Estado de Puebla
AMC	Archivo Municipal de Cuetzalan
AML	Archivo Municipal de Libres
AMT de O	Archivo Municipal de Tetela de Ocampo
AMZ'n	Archivo Municipal de Zacatlán
AMZ'x	Archivo Municipal de Zacapoaxtla
BLC.RHAM	Biblioteca Luis Cabrera, Zacatlán, (RHAM archive)
Hem P	Hemeroteca del Estado de Puebla

***Private***

APAB	Archivo Privado de Arnulfo Barrios, Tetela de Ocampo
APVB	Archivo Privado de Vicente Barrios, Zacatlán
APGL	Archivo Privado de Graciela Lucas, Puebla City
APJFL	Archivo Privado de Juan Francisco Lucas, Puebla City

**Political**

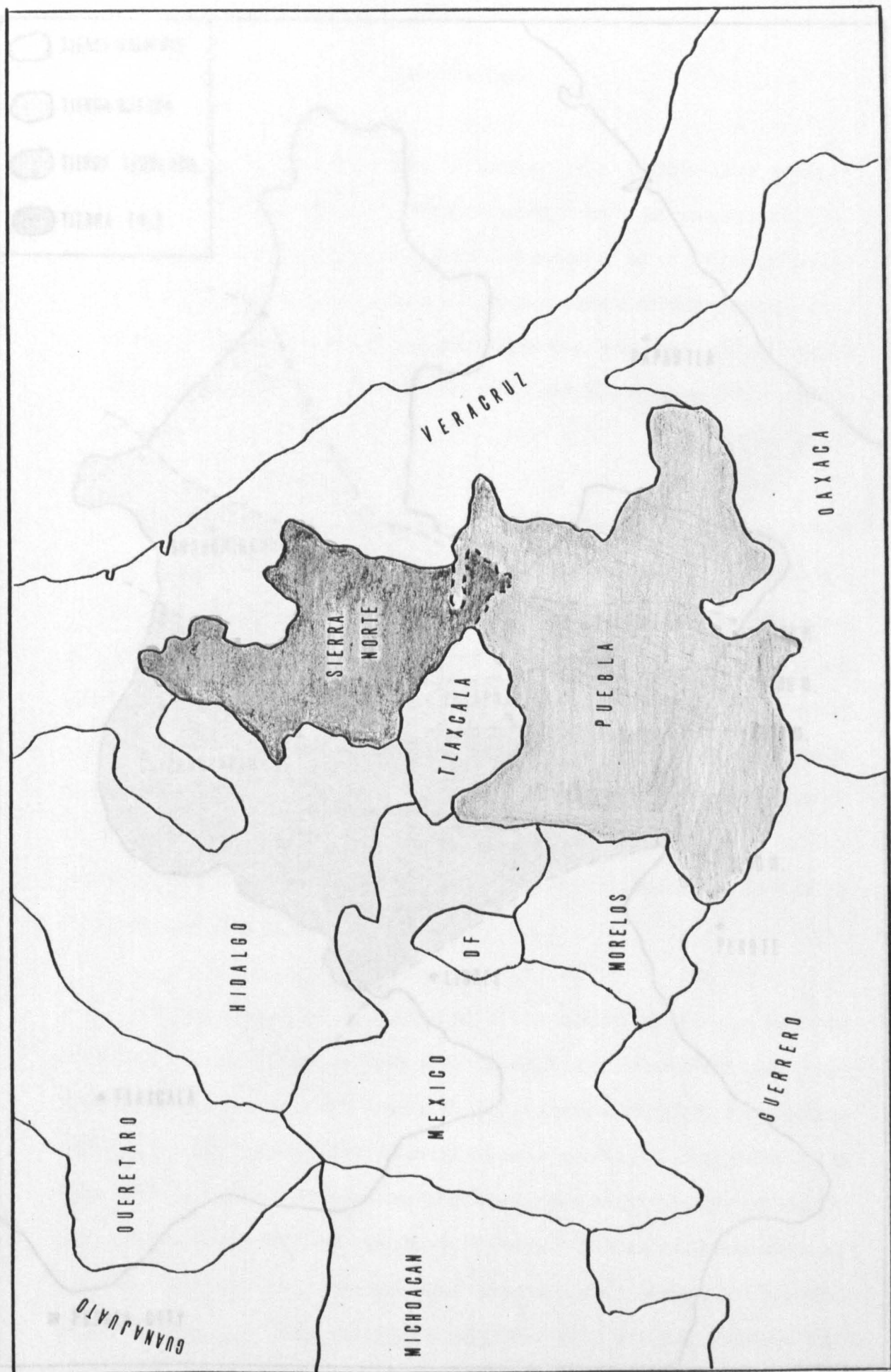
CROM	Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana
PLM	Partido Liberal Mexicano
PNR	Partido Nacional Revolucionario
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional

**Journals**

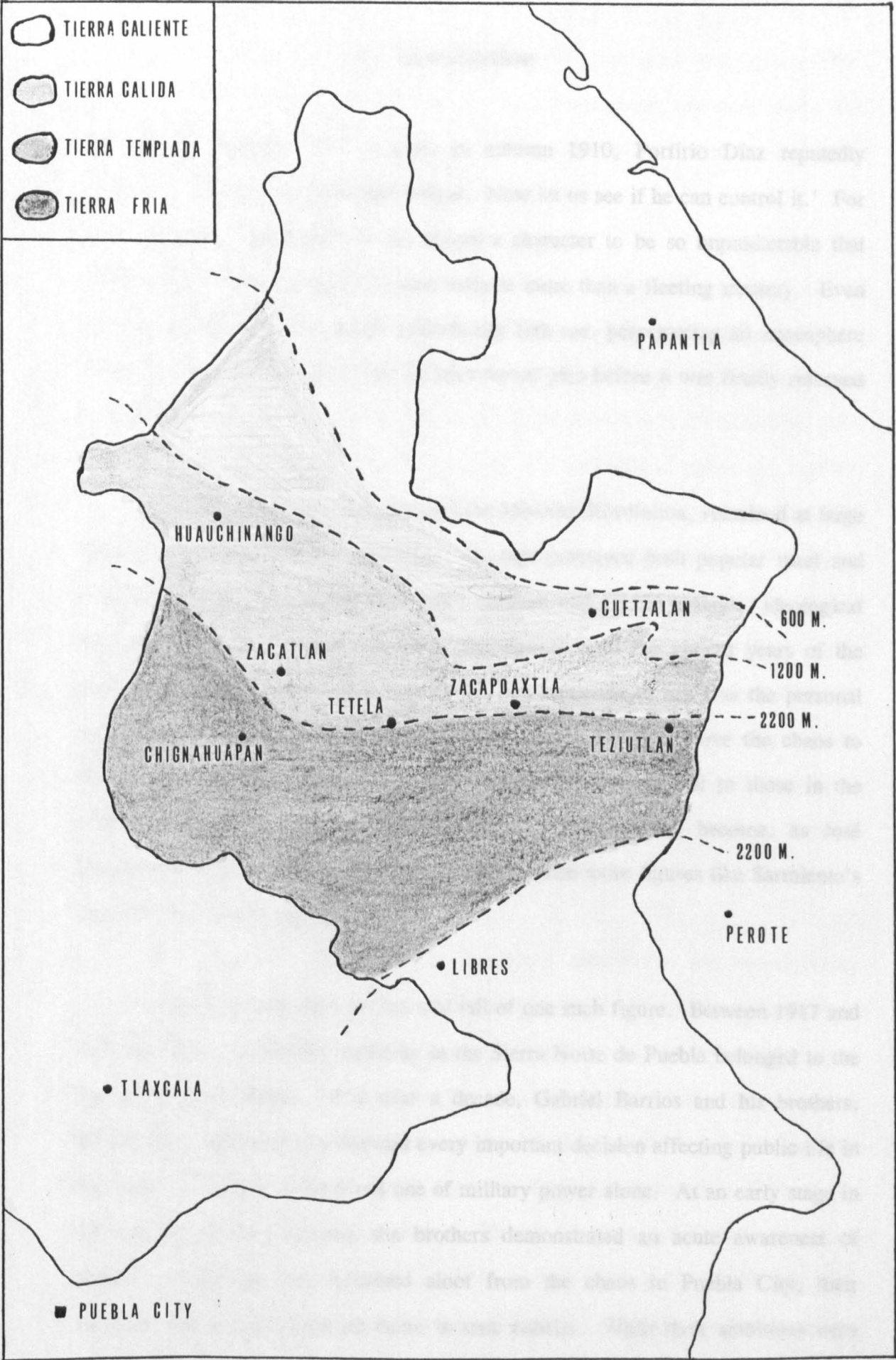
BLAR	Bulletin of Latin American Research
CHLA	Cambridge History of Latin America
HAHR	Hispanic American Historical Review
JLAS	Journal of Latin American Studies
LARR	Latin American Research Review

**Other**

INEHRM	Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana
\$	Mexican Peso







SIERRA DE PUEBLA CLIMATIC ZONES

## 1. Introduction

Alluding to Madero's call to arms in autumn 1910, Porfirio Díaz reputedly remarked, 'Madero has unleashed a tiger. Now let us see if he can control it.' For over a decade, events showed the animal's character to be so unpredictable that neither Madero nor anyone else could achieve more than a fleeting mastery. Even when contained, the tiger would periodically lash out, perpetuating an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust. Two decades would pass before it was finally returned to its cage.

The beast, whose anger sustained the Mexican Revolution, remained at large because of its multi-faceted character. Its rage portrayed both popular rural and urban discontent. The Revolution was a national and a local struggle; ideological and personal. In the uncertain times that characterised the violent years of the Revolution between 1910-1920, one of the few constants in life was the personal bond between a rebel and his leader. And leaders did rise above the chaos to provide direction. As central authority crumbled, so power fell to those in the provinces with the greatest military potential. Mexico had become, as José Vasconcelos later lamented, a country in which 'once more figures like Sarmiento's Facundo walked the land'.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis examines the rise and fall of one such figure. Between 1917 and 1930, the voice of military authority in the Sierra Norte de Puebla belonged to the Barrios Cabrera family. For over a decade, Gabriel Barrios and his brothers, Bardomiano and Demetrio, directed every important decision affecting public life in the region. Yet their story is not one of military power alone. At an early stage in the cacicazgo's development, the brothers demonstrated an acute awareness of politics. Although they remained aloof from the chaos in Puebla City, their influence became an important factor in state politics. While their ambitions were

limited to the Sierra and its environs, their actions attracted warm praise from national politicians and intellectuals alike. Such prestige for any rural leader was rare: for this feat to be achieved by, what many depicted as 'a family of illiterate Indians', was almost unique and deserves closer attention.

Venustiano Carranza's assassination in May 1920 and the consequent rise of the Sonorenses, marked the beginning of a shift in the balance of national politics. With national caudillos assuming a tentative hold on central government, so began the slow, hazardous process of reclaiming the political initiative from the provinces. Two underlying factors impeded the operation: the reticence of provincial caudillos to relinquish their influence, and the weakness of the Sonorenses to enforce their will. Indeed, as Romana Falcón comments: 'the efficiency and loyalty of those caciques possessing their own significant military potential [...] was fundamental to the survival of the national leaders and for the integration and functioning of the national political life'.<sup>2</sup> Not until the 1930s did central government feel sufficiently confident to complete the task of expropriating the power of the remaining regional leaders. Between these two points in Mexican history, the process of subordination to the centre varied in both pace and nature. The tiger of the Revolution was still capable of fighting against those who tried to contain it.

A fundamental aspect of the historical debate on post-revolutionary caudillismo concerns the various methods employed by regional leaders to encourage military recruitment.<sup>3</sup> A leader's ability to act free from government interference was often directly linked to his control of an independent military force. Tlaxcala's post-revolutionary leaders failed to establish popular support. With the death in 1917 of the local *agrarista* rebel leader, Domingo Arenas, the path was clear for the civilian bureaucrats, Ignacio Mendoza and Rafael Apango, to assume political control of the state. Their strength derived almost entirely from their manipulation of the state political machinery: they had little popular support

that might be converted into a military reserve. Increasingly dependent upon federal favour to keep them in office, Mendoza and Apango never enjoyed the autonomy possessed by regional caudillos in neighbouring states.<sup>4</sup>

Two overlapping, but not totally complementary, concepts emerge from the studies of revolutionary leaders: one concerns the character of the rebel movement, while the other concentrates more upon the nature of a leader's relationship with his followers. In Alan Knight's *The Mexican Revolution*, the former category is subdivided according to the specific social and political circumstances of the territory in which a rebel movement operated. *Serrano* rebel leaders, frequently occupying remote regions on the periphery of governmental jurisdiction, often led their followers into combat to protect or reassert local autonomy.<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere, particularly in areas experiencing recent incorporation into the broader economic and political environment, agrarian leaders had more specific motives for rebelling; the recovery of land from hacendados or caciques.

The vital relationship between the caudillo and his following is an theme developed in *Caudillo and peasant in the Mexican Revolution*, edited by David Brading. Many of the studies in this collection reflect the human characteristics of leadership and combine to produce a broad distinction between 'traditional' and 'modern' caudillos. Leaders in the former group developed close personal ties of loyalty with their soldiers and displayed a sensitive awareness of their specific anxieties. Loyalty was often retained through a blend of charismatic leadership and the promise of land in the form of ejidos or military colonies. Such leaders were rarely concerned with broader ideological concepts, their ambitions were to gain control of their own localities. In contrast, a new generation of regional figures demonstrated a greater willingness to become involved in the emerging modern political environment.<sup>6</sup> Alan Knight summarises this development as one that adopted 'new forms of authority, increasingly civilian and bureaucratic, with sound

rational-legal foundations'.<sup>7</sup> These leaders often came from the urban middle classes, rarely sharing the social background of their followers. This prompted them to use a more impersonal style of leadership that relied upon mass organisations to rally support.

Attempts to merge these two concepts of regional leadership can be problematic. *Serrano* groups usually occupied remote locations, far from the seat of state government. Often free from the agrarian conflict witnessed in terrain more suited to large scale agriculture, it is tempting to see *serrano* leaders as more traditional, charismatic and politically ambivalent, likely to adopt any stance to advance their underlying desire for local autonomy. Similarly, greater exposure to the varying effects of government interference highlighted an agrarian leader's need to gain access to, or preferably control over, the machinery of state government to ensure the adoption of favourable agrarian reform.

Such categorisation, however, threatens to impose an artificially rigid structure upon what was, by nature, an indeterminate phenomenon. Knight, qualifies his definition of the *serrano* movement by identifying variations within the movement according to region and chronology. Additionally, agrarian leaders often saw local autonomy as the most effective means of achieving land reform, while it was not uncommon for *serrano* rebels to include agrarian elements within their ranks.<sup>8</sup>

Although agrarian caudillos occupied the governorships of San Luis Potosí and Veracruz, Saturnino Cedillo and Adalberto Tejeda attracted popular support in different ways. Dudley Ankerson's *Agrarian Warlord*, and Romana Falcón's *Revolución y caciquismo. San Luis Potosí, 1919-1938*, set Cedillo's ascendancy within the contemporary regional and national political climate. Both accounts identify Cedillo's charismatic leadership as a reflection of a style reminiscent of

nineteenth century caudillismo. Cedillo's soldiers were loyally bound to their leader by the strong personal ties that evolved from the dangers shared in numerous revolutionary battles.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, Cedillo was blatant in his linkage of land grants on military colonies with the continued support of the recipients of the land. Those whose loyalty wavered, would find their access to land retracted.

Like Cedillo, the agrarian governor of Veracruz, Adalberto Tejeda, was able to muster an army of campesinos in response to national or regional emergencies. But, as Heather Fowler's study *Agrarian Radicalism in Veracruz* shows, Tejeda's influence derived from a very different approach.<sup>10</sup> Tejeda established a network of patronage, not through agrarian military colonies of the kind formed by Cedillo, but by the creation of local agrarian leagues which offered campesinos the hope of land reform. By controlling the centralised bureaucratic system of patronage to which all these leagues were linked, Tejeda established an impersonal, but nonetheless effective, influence upon the *veracruzano* campesino.<sup>11</sup>

Tejeda's agrarianism originated more from his need to build an independent mass following, than from any deep political convictions. By contrast, Gilbert Joseph depicts Felipe Carrillo Puerto, in *Revolution from Without*, as an agrarian leader whose endeavours to muster popular support were fired by profound socialist ideology. Like Tejeda, Carrillo Puerto's strength came from a network of patronage that relied upon state bureaucracy. *Ligas de resistencia* took the place of Cedillo's military colonies as the means of incorporating the campesinos. Through such leagues, Carrillo Puerto encouraged agrarian militancy and, by doing so, sought to establish links of loyalty between himself and the rural masses. Expediency dictated that his modern form of control used the existing network of local caciques to implement his reforms. This contradiction at the base of his power structure proved fatal when, in 1924, Carrillo Puerto's allies failed to save him from the Delahuertista rebels.

Even among caudillos who shared Cedillo's conservatism, relationships with national politicians varied considerably. Indeed, the fact that such ties were often tenuous made it all the more important for the federal government to keep its supporters content. Although Cedillo helped the federal government crush the Delahuerta rebellion, Jacobs suggests that a combination of personal and political factors persuaded the powerful ranchero family, the Figueroas, to join the rebellion. Despite their control of the region's federal military contingent, the subsequent defeat of Delahuertismo heralded the fall of the Figueroas, and with it the demise of traditional caudillismo in the state of Guerrero.

Yet the Figueroas fell not so much because they were militarily weak, but because of the circumstances which forced them to side with the Delahuertistas. Despite their military power in Guerrero, the Figueroas' control was less than absolute. With the radical policies of the agrarian governor, Rodolfo Neri, attracting mass support among worker and campesino organisations, the Guerrero governor represented a credible threat to the Figueroas' regional hegemony.<sup>12</sup> Pledging support for Neri's policies rather than the more conservative aspirations of the Figueroas, does not mean that the federal government favoured radicalism. Rather, it reflected the government's willingness to adopt a flexible approach in gaining its long-term ambition of curbing the powers of regional leaders.

At a more local level, similar ambiguities exist concerning the nature of caciquismo in the post-revolutionary period. Frans Schryer's study, *The Rancheros of Pasafleres*, shows that traditional caudillos and caciques often rose from the midst of the campesino armies they led. Many local leaders had enjoyed a degree of influence in more peaceful times; they often belonged to the rural bourgeoisie as artisans, small traders and rancheros.<sup>13</sup> They offered continuity: pillars of social stability in a world of shifting political sands. Yet, the political opportunism displayed by *serrano* caciques in their quest to establish local autonomy meant that

they often adopted misleading positions regarding issues of local concern. Frans Schryer shows how, in the Sierra Alta de Hidalgo, leaders of rival factions rallied support by fomenting agrarian conflict in an area which had been free of such tension throughout the Revolution. Otilio Villegas identified with the agrarian cause in order to attract campesino support, while his rival, Porfirio Rubio, preyed on the concerns of the larger landowning farmers to gain his following.<sup>14</sup> Although their ranchero background and limited ideological ambitions suggest that Villegas and Rubio were fundamentally conservative and inward looking, by paying lip service to the agrarian issue they nonetheless demonstrated an appreciation of the changing political environment beyond their locality.

Paul Friedrich's portrayal of the cacicazgo of Primo Tapia, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village*, demonstrates the operation of links between regional and local leaders.<sup>15</sup> Using a form of radical mobilisation similar to that of Carrillo Puerto in Yucatán, Primo Tapia swiftly gained control of the agrarian movement in the Zacapu region of Michoacán. Under the patronage of the equally radical state governor, Francisco Múgica, Tapia's network of local agrarian committees represented more than a mere forum for agrarian demands.<sup>16</sup> As in Veracruz under Tejeda, the committees provided a nucleus for military mobilisation used to reinforce the position of the state governor.

The intimacy and intricacy of local politics, as in the case of Primo Tapia, prevent us from depicting post-revolutionary caciquismo purely as a battle between old and new forms of leadership. Certainly, Tapia's message reached a wider audience through his use of the network of local agrarian committees, but Friedrich emphasises more personal factors. The history of radicalism within the Tapia household; the family's traditional position of influence among its neighbours; Tapia's awareness and respect for local Indian customs, all combined to legitimise his position in negotiations with leaders of Zacapu communities. By synthesising



Indian and mestizo traditions, Tapia blurred the distinction between tradition and modernity. Continuity with the past placed Tapia in a position from which he could use modern bureaucratic methods to implement radical reform.

As in the Zacapu district of Michoacán, the Revolution in the Sierra Norte de Puebla reflected the peculiarities of the region's recent history. Agrarian radicalism was not an issue in the Sierra, and in this respect the Revolution took a different form from that found elsewhere in Puebla and the adjacent regions of Tlaxcala and Veracruz.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, campesinos were not bound by horizontal organisations, such as agrarian leagues, but identified more closely with traditional family and community structures. Where campesinos were already in possession of their own plots, the promise of land could not be used as an incentive to follow a leader into battle. Those who wished to recruit the campesinos of the Sierra de Puebla would have to use a different means of penetrating and influencing Indian communities.<sup>18</sup>

While events confirm that the Barrios brothers were successful in gaining the confidence of the Indian serrano, the exact nature of their assumed position is less obvious. On the one hand, the Barrios brothers represented federal military authority: they were officially recognised by the Ministry of War throughout the Carranza and Sonorense administrations. Yet their soldiers remained campesinos who spent more time tending their crops than fighting and few received a regular wage from the Ministry of War. The Barrios brothers themselves appeared to reflect the broader trend of revolutionary leaders who emerged from the ranks of the rural bourgeoisie. Yet Gabriel Barrios in particular is remembered as a simple campesino; he rarely wore fine clothes or a military uniform, preferring the simple *traje de manta* of his neighbours and companions. Lacking the revolutionary ideology of Tejeda across the border in Veracruz, the Barrios brothers nonetheless presided over a programme of regional development that won the acclaim of the

radical revolutionaries, José Vasconcelos and Vicente Lombardo Toledano. Clearly, the Barrios cacicazgo was too complex to be placed within any one category of post-revolutionary leadership.

The underlying theme of this thesis is to use the cacicazgo of Gabriel Barrios as a prism to shed light on the aftermath of the Revolution as it affected the people of the Sierra Norte de Puebla. In doing so, attention is given to the extent to which the cacicazgo was a product of the region's past, and whether Gabriel Barrios' personal qualities placed him in a unique position to assume regional prominence. As such an approach relates directly to the cacique's biographical details, a broad sketch of Gabriel Barrios' background serves the dual purpose of resolving existing misconceptions and placing Barrios within the more general framework of Mexico's twentieth-century history.

It is unclear when and for what motive Barrios' mestizo father, José María, made the decision to settle in the Indian village of Cuacuila. It appears that he had once lived in the town of Amixtlán, located in the valley below Cuacuila.<sup>19</sup> José María subsequently married a local Indian, Dominga Cabrera, and the couple had five children: Amado, Gabriel, Bardoniano, Pilar and Demetrio. Confusion surrounds the year of Gabriel Barrios' birth as the event was not registered at the time. However, the weight of later evidence suggests that he was born on 18 March 1888.<sup>20</sup>

At first sight, the Barrios family's social position in the rural district of Zacatlán would appear to place Gabriel Barrios in that category of *ranchero* leaders who enjoyed prominence during the Revolution as a result of their previous status. Born and raised in Cuacuila, the Barrios brothers received no formal education and their childhood and adolescence were heavily influenced by the cultural values of their Nahuatl mother. Nevertheless, the family's activities in breeding and selling

horses led to considerable contact with mestizo traders in Tetela de Ocampo and Zacatlán, providing the family with a measure of economic wealth akin to that enjoyed by rancheros in the nearby Sierra Alta de Hidalgo. Before the Revolution, their relative wealth enabled the family to buy sufficient land to warrant the employment of seasonal labourers.

It was this combination of relative economic prosperity and Indian cultural background that provided Gabriel Barrios with the qualities necessary to fulfil his assumed role. Mestizos such as Carrillo Puerto, Primo Tapia and Juvencio Nochebuena were able to gain legitimacy within Indian communities as a consequence of their sensitivity to Indian cultural values.<sup>21</sup> The Barrios brothers, however, were different in that their continued reliance upon their ethnic constituency was directly attributed to the social and ethnic childhood experiences that they shared with their Nahua neighbours. The family's social prestige preceded revolutionary action and suggests that *cuacuileños* had accepted mestizo culture to the extent of correlating wealth with local influence. However, the Barrios family's success in broadening their base of popular support in the face of strong mestizo opposition reflected the region's ethnic historical precedents.

No study of the power structure in the Sierra de Puebla during the 1920s can afford to ignore the region's past. A predominant theme that emerges from Thomson's work on nineteenth century liberalism within the Sierra is the interdependence that existed during the latter half of the century between mestizo liberal politicians and local Indian leaders.<sup>22</sup> Just as Cedillo acted as a social and political intermediary between national figures and campesinos, so the liberal politicians of the Sierra sought an agent to harness the fighting potential of the region's Indians. This role was occupied by the Indian 'Patriarch of the Sierra', Juan Francisco Lucas. The cultural barriers that created the need for such an intermediary were as apparent in the 1920s as they had been in the 1850s. Indian

communities in the nineteenth century had looked to 'Tata Juan Francisco' for guidance: in the 1920s, Gabriel Barrios was the Indian leader who provided direction and continuity with the past.

Inevitable comparisons have been made between Juan Francisco Lucas and Gabriel Barrios. Yet the two men held power in distinctly different political environments. An important part of this thesis will analyse the way in which Barrios was able to balance the need to adjust to modern circumstances while remaining sensitive to the expectations of the patriarchal role he had inherited. This went beyond the issue of discarding old ideas for new, and reached to the heart of the differing psychologies of the ethnic groups who inhabited the Sierra. Barrios could not afford to ignore the values upon which Indian society was based. Barrios' military potential, like that of Juan Francisco Lucas' fifty years earlier, relied upon recruitment from the Indian communities of the Sierra. At the same time, Barrios could not fail to establish links with the external political influences that had begun to erode the region's former isolation.

The blend of incentives and compromises that Lucas devised to satisfy Indian communities and mestizo Liberals in the nineteenth century, needed modifying to suit the environment in which Barrios operated. This thesis will identify the methods adopted by Barrios in his successful attempt to sustain the intermediary role of his predecessor. In doing so, it will be possible to gauge the extent to which the region's social, economic and ethnic peculiarities led Barrios into using methods substantially different from those used by his contemporaries in other regions of the Republic.

Several Mexico City archives were consulted during my research for this thesis, although few contain details of the Barrios cacicazgo. Essential information regarding the Barrios brothers' rise to power and their clashes with opponents lies in

the *Cancelado* and *Histórico* sections of the *Archivo de la Defensa Nacional* (ADN). Relevant personal files in the *Sección Cancelado*, provide information that reaches beyond purely military matters and sheds light on the cacique's involvement with political figures at local, regional and national levels. By extremely good fortune, the *Sección Histórico* holds a file entitled, *Historia del 46o Batallón*. Summarising the military history of Barrios' unit, the account contains detailed descriptions of all the operations conducted by the battalion from the Revolution to the 1950s.

The *Archivo General de la Nación* (AGN), particularly the Obregón-Calles presidential section, contains much correspondence concerning Barrios' activities in the Sierra. Documents relating to military matters frequently duplicate information available in the ADN. The archive is most useful, however, in providing evidence of the ways in which regional development schemes promoted by Barrios within the Sierra helped to establish close ties between his civilian representatives and the presidency. The archive also reveals much about the political battle between Barrios and Puebla's governor, Claudio N. Tirado.

The combined resources of the National Hemeroteca at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Mexico City, and the State Hemeroteca in Puebla City, provide indications of how Barrios' actions in the Sierra were received by political commentators in regional and national capitals. Particularly useful are the collections of the Puebla newspapers, *El Monitor* between 1920-22, and *La Opinión* between 1928-30. Both collections can be found in the hemeroteca in Puebla City.

A major burden for the student of Puebla's history is the absence of an archive for the executive branch of the state government. The legislature archive contains little material of obvious relevance to the Barrios cacicazgo. Municipal archives vary greatly in both condition and utility. With the notable exception of

Teziutlán, other municipal archives in the Sierra were in good order and were easy to access. Although the Libres archive contains interesting details of clashes between Barrios' representatives and local *agraristas* on the *altiplano*, few archives hold specific information on the nature of Barrios' influence during the 1920s. They are useful, however, in providing a clear impression of how each district tried to maintain a semblance of orderly life in the face of revolutionary disruption.

By far the richest primary source for all aspects of the Barrios cacicazgo, particularly relating to the network of grass-root support, resides in the RHAM archive of the Biblioteca Luis Cabrera in Zacatlán. Regular communiques between the Barrios brothers and their personal network of local military commanders, *jefes de armas*, give invaluable information of the daily operation of the cacicazgo. They reveal the nature of the relationship that existed between the Barrios brothers and their clients, and the scope of the *jefes de armas*' military and political duties. The archive contains military reports, review lists, details of weapons and provisions pertaining to the 46th. Battalion. Private and official correspondence identifies the important role that Demetrio Barrios played in the day to day running of the cacicazgo, as well as documenting the relationships between the cacicazgo and politicians and military officers outside the region.

Considerable time was spent walking through the landscape in which the Barrios brothers operated. Ostensibly conducting oral history, a physical appreciation of the topographical and climatic conditions of the Sierra provided an appreciation of the physical realities of rural life in this region.<sup>23</sup> Interviews were conducted with a range of people with personal experiences of the Barrios cacicazgo. Elderly serranos who had served under Barrios or fought against his troops, members of the Barrios family, children of his political allies and foes, all contributed towards providing a vivid addition to the documentary evidence.

A published collection of interviews recorded by Carlos Marentes Bravo contains recollections of those who served under Barrios as *jefes de armas*, or who experienced revolutionary life in the Sierra under the Barrios brothers' rule.<sup>24</sup> Equally revealing are the observations made in a government report written by the Under-Secretary of Education, Moisés Saenz, published in 1927.<sup>25</sup> Although predominantly relating to the condition of federal education in the Sierra, Saenz makes many pertinent observations regarding the relationship between municipal politicians and Gabriel Barrios.

Personal archives proved less useful for documentary evidence, although Vicente Barrios Vargas (Demetrio Barrios' son), has copies of documents held in the ADN. Gabriel Barrios' sons, José María and Arnulfo, possess many fascinating photographs of their father and uncles taken during and after the Revolution when the cacicazgo was at its height.

Existing testimonies of the life of Gabriel Barrios Cabrera produce a sketchy, inaccurate image. Mention of the Barrios cacicazgo appears in Hernández Enríquez's work, *Historia Moderna de Puebla*. While the three volume work details Puebla history in great detail, a major weakness is the strong reliance on newspaper articles as a primary source. Certainly, in relation to Gabriel Barrios, this has led to a false assessment of the leader's influence in the Sierra. A few lines in Cordero y Torres, *Historia compendiada del estado de Puebla* give a brief summary of the Barrios cacicazgo.<sup>26</sup> Luisa Paré's study of rural society in the region during the 1960s has some interesting, if at times inaccurate, details relating to Barrios and those local caciques who followed during the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> David La France's essay, 'El resurgimiento militar del cacicazgo de Lucas durante la Revolución', also contains a summary of Gabriel Barrios' rise to power and describes the basic framework of the Barrios cacicazgo.<sup>28</sup> LaFrance's eventual conclusion of Barrios as a repressive cacique, while conforming to the general

opinion, is weakened by the paucity of supporting documentation. Only a more comprehensive study of the cacicazgo can provide the evidence needed to make an accurate analysis: in this respect, this thesis sheds important new light on post-revolutionary caciquismo in the Sierra de Puebla.

While recognising the limitations inherent in his reliance on newspaper articles as a primary source, Rogelio Sánchez's dissertation of political events in Puebla during the 1920s and 1930s, is nonetheless a useful source of reference.<sup>29</sup> Wil Pansters' study of the *avilacamachismo* in Puebla politics provides a clear impression of how the Avila Camacho family's authoritarianism survived the broader trend of regional political capitulation under the weight of pressure from central government.<sup>30</sup>

There are several local historical studies concerning various districts of the Sierra. The majority rely heavily upon anecdotal evidence, are overwhelmingly partisan and present an interpretation of events from the perspective of the dominant mestizo minority.<sup>31</sup> While they are of some value in identifying the role played by prominent families in a district's history, the most revealing aspect is the elitism that pervades the texts. The deference shown to local powerful families in the 1920s is still evident in the accounts written decades later. One of the more factual and least biased of these studies is Marco Barrios Bonilla's study of the development of a coffee economy in the municipality of Cuetzalan. It provides useful data on the municipality's early twentieth century social and economic development.

Mention has already been made of the significant influence that ethnicity has played in serrano politics. The only contemporary observations regarding ethnic considerations in the Sierra are those included in Moisés Saenz's report. He gives some indication of the relationship between different ethnic groups during the 1920s. More recently, a wave of anthropological studies has swept across the



Sierra.<sup>32</sup> Some, such as Torres-Trueba's investigation into the relationship between factionalism and ethnicity in Zacapoaxtla during the 1960s, have direct relevance to the region's post-revolutionary experience. Other studies contribute towards an appreciation of the complexity of Indian values: a subject which Barrios was bound to confront if he hoped to gain legitimacy within the Sierra.

A few words need to be added concerning the terminology used throughout this thesis. The generic term 'serrano' is universally used within the Sierra de Puebla to describe all those who live within the region. In order to avoid confusion with Alan Knight's use of the word to define an adherent of a local autonomist movement, when used in the latter context, the word 'serrano' will be italicised.

Accurate definitions of ethnic groups in the Sierra are fraught with potential pitfalls. Local expressions are often derogatory, while generally accepted definitions beyond the Sierra, such as *gente de razón* and *criollo*, are not readily transferable to a serrano society that is particularly conscious of ethnic differences. While the following divisions may appear clumsy, in striving to reflect how serranos perceive themselves and their neighbours, terms have been chosen which are readily understood by those without a knowledge of the region.

The expressions 'white serrano' and 'white elite' are reserved for those regarded by others as members of the serrano elite. Their physical features, customs and social mores reflected their proud links with Spanish colonial ancestry. The majority of white elite lived in the cabeceras and were often educated in Puebla and Mexico City.

The term 'Indian' is more problematic because no consensus exists within the Sierra regarding membership of this category: white elite use a much broader definition than the Indians themselves. In order to reflect most accurately the local

usage of the term, the word Indian is used for all those serranos whose first and preferred language is one possessing pre-Columbian origins.<sup>33</sup> While this definition appears capacious, it does reflect an individual's likely cultural background and ethnic self-perception. Those individuals with strong desires and opportunities to break out of their Indian environment were likely to have sought a mestizo education and adopted the Spanish language as their own. Conversely many serranos, such as Gabriel Barrios, who had a good deal of contact with mestizo society, nonetheless spoke Spanish badly and preferred their native *nahuatl*.

Consequently, while it was recognised by all serranos that Gabriel Barrios was something special, he was nonetheless viewed by white serranos as the 'indito' cacique. Indian serranos defined him according to their relationship with him: in more peripheral regions of the Sierra, especially in non-Nahua communities, he was seen as a mestizo. Yet in areas closer to his stronghold of Cuacuila, evidence suggests that many Indians bestowed mythological qualities upon him; a strong indication of his acceptance as one of their own.

One further issue regarding Indian ethnic identity requires clarification, and this relates to the nature of the Indian community in the Sierra during the 1920s. Later anthropological studies of serrano communities clearly discern many of the traditional features associated with Indian culture: elders, cargo systems, annual ceremonial cycles. Yet it is equally clear that each Indian community adapted to non-Indian influences in different ways. Evidence suggests that in the 1920s, similar flexibility was displayed by Indian communities in their relationships with their non-Indian neighbours, and that an Indian community could retain its ethnic character even though inhabited by some mestizo families. For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, the term, 'Indian community' is indicative of the predominance of Indian traditions and values rather than any racial demarcation of its residents. For example, although the Barrios family's external commercial activities indicated that

Indian traditions in Cuacuila had been modified, the underlying traditional character of the community led it to be viewed as an Indian settlement.

As elsewhere in Mexico, the term 'mestizo' refers to the wide range of serranos that fall between the two socio-ethnic extremes outlined above. Whenever appropriate, however, further information will be given in the text to clarify how particular mestizo subjects were ethnically perceived by their fellow serranos.

## Footnotes for Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> Brading, D.A., 'Introduction: national politics and the populist tradition', in Brading, D.A. (ed.), *Caudillo and peasant in the Mexican Revolution*, (Cambridge, 1980), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Falcón, R., *Revolución y caciquismo. San Luis Potosí, 1919-1938*, (Mexico, 1984), p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> For important contributions to the study of post-revolutionary caudillismo see: Jacobs, I., 'Rancheros of Guerrero: The Figueroa brothers and the revolution', in Brading, D.A. (ed.), *Caudillo and peasant in the Mexican Revolution*, (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 76-91; Jacobs, I., *Ranchero Revolt. The Mexican Revolution in Guerrero*, (Austin, 1982); Ankerson, D., *Agrarian Warlord, Saturnino Cedillo and the Mexican Revolution in San Luis Potosí*, (DeKalb, 1984); Ankerson, D., 'Saturnino Cedillo, a traditional caudillo in San Luis Potosí 1890-1938', in Brading, D.A. (ed.), *Caudillo and peasant in the Mexican Revolution*, (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 140-68; Falcón, R., *Revolución y caciquismo*; Falcón, R., 'Military Caciques in Magnificence and Decline: San Luis Potosí in the Mexican Revolution', in Pansters, W. and Ouweneel, A. (eds.), *Region State and Capitalism in Mexico, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (Amsterdam, 1989), pp. 91-109; Schryer, F.J., *The Rancheros of Pisaflores. The History of a Peasant Bourgeoisie in Twentieth Century Mexico*, (Toronto, 1980); Schryer, F.J., *Ethnicity and Class Conflict in Rural Mexico*, (Princeton, 1990); Buve, R. & Falcón, R., 'Tlaxcala and San Luis Potosí under the Sonorenses (1920-1934): Regional Revolutionary Power Groups and the National State', in Pansters, W. and Ouweneel, A. (eds.), *Region State and Capitalism in Mexico, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (Amsterdam, 1989), pp. 110-33; Fowler Salamini, H., *Agrarian Radicalism in Veracruz, 1920-38*, (London, 1978); Fowler Salamini, H., 'Revolutionary caudillos in the 1920's: Francisco Múgica and Adalberto Tejeda', in Brading, D.A. (ed.), *Caudillo and peasant in the Mexican Revolution*, (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 169-92; Joseph, G.M., *Revolution from Without. Yucatán, Mexico, and the United States 1880-1924*, (Cambridge, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Buve & Falcón, 'Tlaxcala and San Luis Potosí', pp. 110-33.

<sup>5</sup> Knight, A., *The Mexican Revolution*, (Cambridge, 1986), Vol 1., pp. 368-70.

<sup>6</sup> Ankerson, 'Saturnino Cedillo', pp. 140-41.

<sup>7</sup> Knight, A., 'Peasant and Caudillo in revolutionary Mexico 1910-17', in *Caudillo and peasant*, p. 58.

<sup>8</sup> Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, p. 368.

<sup>9</sup> Márquez, E., 'Gonzalo N. Santos o la naturaleza del "tanteómetro político"', in Martínez Assad, C. (ed.), *Estadistas, caciques y caudillos*, (Mexico, 1988), pp. 369-70.

<sup>10</sup> Fowler, *Agrarian Radicalism*; Fowler, 'Revolutionary caudillos', pp. 169-92.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 'Revolutionary caudillos', p. 170.

<sup>12</sup> Jacobs, *Ranchero Revolt*, p. 116.

<sup>13</sup> Schryer, *The Rancheros of Pisaflores*, p. 7.

Schryer defines rancheros in the Huehuetla region as members within a peasant community who owned their own farms and were actively engaged in local commerce. Rancheros often employed seasonal wage labour and shared the dress, deportment and speech of their economic subordinates.

<sup>14</sup> Schryer, *The Rancheros of Pisaflares*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>15</sup> Friedrich, P., *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village*, (Chicago, 1977).

<sup>16</sup> For details of Múgica's political stance see Fowler, 'Revolutionary caudillos', pp. 169-92.

<sup>17</sup> For details of *agrarismo* in Tlaxcala, see Buve. R., *El movimiento revolucionario en Tlaxcala*, (Mexico, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Schryer, *Rancheros of Pisaflares*, pp. 55-57.

Schryer found that those most likely to follow such leaders were not the *jornaleros*, whose subsistence depended solely upon their labour on the land of others. Rather their supporters tended to be those with aspirations of social mobility; the 'middle peasants', as Schryer calls them, who were often self-employed tenants whose aspirations of social mobility had been thwarted by the local elite.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with José María Barrios, (first son of Gabriel Barrios), 23 Oct. 1993, Tonalapa, Tetela de Ocampo.

Little is known about the earlier life of José María Barrios, but his grandson believes that he was an officer in the serrano forces that fought under Juan Francisco Lucas at the battle of Puebla on 5 May 1862.

Interview with Guillermo Mejía Cabrera, 22 Dec. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.

Señor Mejía, a former employee of the Barrios family during the 1920s, suggests that José María Barrios originally settled in Cuacuila as a result of having been forced out of his previous community due to his unsociable and unruly behaviour. No evidence, however, exists of the case having attracted the attention of local authorities.

<sup>20</sup> The ill-health of both parents was given as the reason why Gabriel Barrios' birth was not registered. Documentation regarding the date of birth was only produced much later to satisfy military requirements, and these state the date to be 18 March 1888. However, in various legal documents, Barrios' given age shows no consistency and suggests a range of possible dates of birth from 1876 to 1888.

<sup>21</sup> For details of Juvencio Nochebuena's cacicazgo see Schryer, *Ethnicity and Class*, pp. 127-51.

<sup>22</sup> See, Thomson, G.P.C., 'Popular Aspects of Liberalism in Mexico 1848-1888', in *Bulletin of Latin American Research* (BLAR), 10:3 (1991), pp. 265-92; Thomson, G.P.C., 'Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism: the National Guard, Philharmonic Corps and Patriotic Juntas in Mexico, 1847-88', *Journal of Latin American Studies* (JLAS), 22, (1990), pp. 31-68; Thomson, G.P.C., 'Agrarian Conflict in the Municipality of Cuetzalan (Sierra de Puebla): The Rise and Fall of "Pala" Agustín Dieguillo, 1861-1894', in *Hispanic American Historical Review* (HAHR), 71:2 (1991), pp. 205-58; Thomson, G.P.C., 'Montaña and Llanura in the Politics of Central Mexico: The Case of Puebla, 1820-1920', in *Region, State and Capitalism in Mexico*, pp. 59-78. Thomson, G.P.C., 'Los indios y el servicio militar en el México decimonónico. ¿Leva o ciudadanía?', in Escobar, A. (ed.), *Indio, nación y comunidad en el México del siglo XIX*, (Mexico, 1993), pp. 207-51; LaFrance, D., & Thomson, G.P.C., 'Juan Francisco Lucas: Patriarch of the Sierra Norte de Puebla', in Beezley, W.H. (ed.), *The Human Tradition in Latin America*, (Wilmington, 1987), pp. 1-13; See also Valderrama Rouy, P. & Ramírez Suárez, C., 'Resistencia étnica y defensa del territorio en el Totonacapan serrano: Cuetzalan en el siglo XIX', in *Indio, nación y comunidad en el México del siglo XIX*, pp. 189-206; Mallon, F.E., *Peasant and nation, the making of postcolonial Mexico and Peru*, (Berkeley, 1995).

23 For a description of the Sierra, the Nahuatl communities and their customs see: Nutini, H.G. and Isaac, B.L., *Los pueblos de habla nahuatl de la región de Tlaxcala y Puebla*, (Mexico, 1974).

24 Marentes Bravo, C., *Relatos Revolucionarios*, (Puebla, 1985).

25 Saenz, M., *Escuelas federales en la Sierra de Puebla*, (Mexico, 1927).

26 Hernández Enríquez, G.A., *Historia Moderna de Puebla*, (Puebla, 1986); Cordero y Torres, E., *Diccionario biográfico de Puebla*, (Puebla, 1972); Cordero y Torres, E., *Historia compendiada del estado de Puebla (1531-1963)*, (Puebla, 1966), vol. 3, p. 92; INEHRM. *Diccionario-Histórico y biográfico de la Revolución Mexicana*, vol 5, (Mexico 1992); AGN, INEHRM, c. 13, exp. 20.

Information used in the above publications appears to have been based upon inaccurate press speculation made at the time of Barrios' removal from the Sierra. See *La Opinión*, 28 May 1930, p. 1.

Chadwick, J.B., *Los bienes perdidos*, (Mexico, 1992). This novel describes life in the Sierra de Puebla during the post-revolutionary period and is based loosely on the fortunes of the Barrios and Avila Camacho families.

27 Paré, L., 'Inter-ethnic and class relations, Sierra Norte region, State of Puebla', in *Race and Class in post-colonial society*, (UNESCO, 1977), pp. 377-420; Paré, L., 'Caciquismo y estructura de poder en la Sierra Norte de Puebla', in Bartra, R. (ed.), *Caciquismo y Poder Político en el México Rural*, (Mexico, 1982), pp. 31-61. Paré inaccurately states that some of Barrios' *gente de confianza* denounced him as a cacique and that this led to his removal from the Sierra in 1919.

28 Thomson, G.P.C., & LaFrance, D., 'El resurgimiento del caciquismo liberal en la Sierra de Puebla durante la Revolución: El caso de Francisco Lucas', in *Memoria del Congreso Internacional sobre la Revolución Mexicana*, (INEHRM, 1991), pp. 237-76.

LaFrance's assumption of the Barrios cacicazgo rely largely upon the brief details found in Cordero y Torres' *Diccionario Biográfico de Puebla*, and inaccurate conclusions in Luisa Paré's studies.

29 Sánchez López, R., 'La Institucionalización. Una historia de los derrotados: Puebla 1929-1932', (Tesis profesional, Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (UAP), Puebla, 1992).

30 Pansters, W., *Politics and Power in Puebla - The Political History of a Mexican State 1937-87*, (Amsterdam, 1990).

31 For an account of events in Huauchinango and Zacatlán during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Rivera, Prof. M., *Recuerdos de ayer*, (Zacatlán, [n.d.]). For a local history of Chignahuapan, see the three volume collection by Kuri Camacho, R., *Micro Historia de Chignahuapan*, (Chignahuapan, Pue., 1985). Local histories of the Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan municipalities include; Sánchez Flores, R., *Zacapoaxtla: República de indios y villa de españoles: Relación histórica*, (Zacapoaxtla, 1984); Sosa, M.L., *Crónica de Zacapoaxtla*, ([n.p.], [n.d.]); Ramírez Suárez, C., et. al., *"Nosotros recordamos el pasado: Reseña etno-histórica del municipio de Cuetzalan en el siglo XIX"*, (Puebla, 1992); Barrios Bonilla, G.M., *El café en Cuetzalan*, (Mexico, 1991).

32 See Viqueira, C. & Palerm, A., 'Alcoholismo, brujería y homicidio en dos comunidades rurales de Mexico', in *América Indígena*, XIV:1 (1954), pp. 7-36; César Espínola, J., 'Ensayo de antropología aplicada entre los Nahuas de la Sierra de Puebla', in *América Indígena*, XXV:1 (1965), pp. 79-116; Bulcher, I.R., 'La organización ceremonial de una aldea mexicana', in *América Indígena*, XXVII:2 (1967), pp. 237-63; Torres-Trueba, H.E., 'Faccionalismo en un municipio mexicano: Estudio preliminar de las expresiones políticas, económicas y religiosas de faccionalismo en Zacapoaxtla, Pue.', in *América*

*Indígena*, XXX:3 (1970), pp. 727-49; Taggart, J.M., 'The Fissiparous Process in Domestic Groups of a Nahuat-Speaking Community', in *Ethnology*, 11, (1972), pp. 132-49; Taggart, J.M., 'Action Group Recruitment: A Nahuat Case', in Nutini, H.G., Carrasco, P., & Taggart, J.M. (eds.), *Essays on Mexican Kinship*, (Pittsburgh, 1976), pp. 137-53; Slade, D.L., 'Kinship in the Social Organisation of a Nahuat-Speaking Community in the Central Highlands', in Nutini, et al., *Essays on Mexican Kinship*, pp. 155-85; Beaucage, P., 'Anthrologie économique des communautés indigènes de la Sierra Norte de Puebla (Mexique). Les villages de basse montagne', in *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 10:2 (1973), pp. 114-33; Lourdes-Arizpe, S., *Parentesco y Economía en una sociedad Nahua. (Nican Pehua Zacatipan)*, (Mexico, 1973); Taggart, J.M., *Nahua Myth and Social Structure*, (Austin, 1983).

<sup>33</sup> For a comprehensive study of Pre-columbian and colonial settlement in the Sierra de Puebla see, García Martínez, B., *Los pueblos de la Sierra*, (Mexico, 1987).

## 2. El "Indito" General: Militarism in the Sierra Norte

While the strength of the Barrios cacicazgo was the eventual interdependence of each its many components, the lifeblood from which all else flowed was Gabriel Barrios' role as the senior federal military officer in the Sierra. As in other regions of the Republic, an official military position was little more than the federal recognition of a cacique's ability to mobilise an independent military force. Yet, in the Sierra de Puebla the ethnic composition of serrano society created particular circumstances. Without the opportunities provided by the years of civil strife, the entrepreneurial and organisational talent that Barrios later displayed would have failed to flourish: frost-bitten in its infancy by a minority non-Indian society that had long dominated political, social and economic life in the cabeceras. His military position, however, gave him an opportunity to break free from the usual restraints of his racial origins and gave him a degree of influence in the Sierra superior to that possessed by any other Indian in the region's post-conquest history.

This chapter discusses the character of Barrios' Indian army: a force so significant as to prompt fears of a caste war in the minds of some of the region's non-Indian population. The rationale for such fears is tested by investigating the historical precedent for Indian mobilisation. Within this history, particular attention is placed upon the role of the cultural intermediary and, in identifying the requisite characteristics of such an individual, an assessment will be made of Gabriel Barrios' suitability for the position. Finally, an analysis will be made of the ways in which Barrios steered the Sierra through the turbulent years of the Revolution: how, during times of military and political intrigue, he managed to gain the confidence of successive presidents and, under their gaze, establish the foundations of a cacicazgo that encompassed the entire Sierra and beyond.



*National Guardsmen: Patriots or opportunists?*

Throughout the nineteenth century, National Guard recruitment in the Sierra de Puebla produced a pattern of localised response. It was not infrequent for Indian communities to organise their own Guard unit, using their freedom under the terms of the Liberal Constitution to appoint their own leaders. The Liberal politician, Juan N. Méndez, and Juan Francisco Lucas had laid down the ground rules during the 1860s, and in the battles that followed, serrano Indians and mestizos frequently fought side by side. The Indians' reward for their service was the large measure of local autonomy, so cherished by Lucas, that allowed them to determine their own affairs free from excessive outside interference.<sup>1</sup>

Thomson's work makes it clear that the serrano National Guardsman understood the issues raised by the wars he waged. Far from being mere cannon-fodder in the wars of others, the serrano proved able to engage with the ideological debates of the day, and to choose those items on the Liberal menu that most served his interests. Javier Guerra suggests active service made many national guardsmen 'view the rights derived from Guard membership as an exclusive charter of liberal-patriotic citizenship'.<sup>2</sup> One should be careful, however, when transposing this essentially national perception to the Sierra de Puebla. Even in the bastions of popular liberalism, Xochiapulco and Cuahuigtic, it was local issues and interests that encouraged National Guard membership.<sup>3</sup> Infact, the only national aspect of these Guard units was their title. Lucas' National Guards were concerned with issues that directly concerned them: exemption from *leva* and crippling tax contributions, and greater community autonomy were of more interest to the serrano than universal suffrage and equality.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the underlying motives of National Guard membership, the units did create a military precedent. Certain cabeceras and *barrios* developed a tradition of military involvement: communities became accustomed to retaining their weapons and reacting to local emergencies by mobilising locally organised militias. Although these units were by no means exclusively Indian, beyond the cabeceras, the preponderance of Indian communities meant that many militia units were led by figures whose right to lead was determined by criteria laid down by a community's customs and traditions.

Nineteenth century militarism also established a measure of understanding and a channel of communication between those communities willing to fight and the mestizo politicians who, in return for such services, promised to address their local concerns. The function of the cultural intermediary, personified at the regional level by Lucas, was to ensure that each side honoured their commitments. In order to gain the acceptance of the serrano communities, units demanded that Lucas negotiate to satisfy their local objectives: anything less might provoke the form of angry, direct response exemplified by the rebellion led by the National Guard leader, Francisco Agustín Dieguillo ('Palagustín') in Cuetzalan.<sup>5</sup> Equally, Lucas' value to mestizo politicians depended upon the political climate. As Thomson observes, with Lucas' patron, Méndez, in the ascendancy, progress was made in providing the Sierra communities with the sort of protection they sought.<sup>6</sup> When the political climate changed and the need for a serrano fighting force decreased, the source of patronage ran dry and Lucas' influence correspondingly diminished.

Despite the fact that the changing political climate eventually eclipsed Lucas' role, his place in Tetela de Ocampo's illustrious history had been assured. Folklore and lyric contributed towards the creation of a mythical image of a man respected by Indians and mestizos alike.<sup>7</sup> (see appendix I.) Yet,

as Palagustín's bellicosity in Cuetzalan highlights, in times when Lucas' services as a recruiting officer diminished, so his defence of regional autonomy became less effective at holding back the encroachment represented by outside economic interests. LaFrance describes Lucas' brave struggle to retain a measure of unity within the Sierra that might yet save the autonomy of the region.<sup>8</sup> Yet by 1910, Lucas was surely chasing an illusion. True, he again became a pivotal figure as military chiefs from all sides sought his intermediary skills, but the Sierra in 1910 was a very different world from that of the 1860s.<sup>9</sup> Whatever Lucas might have been able to offer the serrano communities, autonomy had been removed from the political agenda.

There is no doubt, however, that during the Revolution Lucas still commanded the respect that he had earned in former times. It is not surprising, therefore, that when Lucas called upon his fellow serranos to take up arms, he once again received a positive response. While the presence in his *estado mayor* of the mestizo, Tranquilino Quintero from Cuautempan, warns against viewing Lucas' military following as purely Indian, as in the past, the underlying structure of the Brigada Serrana was the coalition of locally organised groups led by popular leaders of Indian communities. The pattern of National Guard recruitment was repeated: Lucas, acting as an intermediary, persuaded community leaders to organise units to fight local versions of a national struggle. Among the many who responded to Lucas' call to arms was Gabriel Barrios Cabrera and his fellow Indian campesinos from the hill-top village of Cuacuila.<sup>10</sup>



Bardomiano

Gabriel

Demetrio

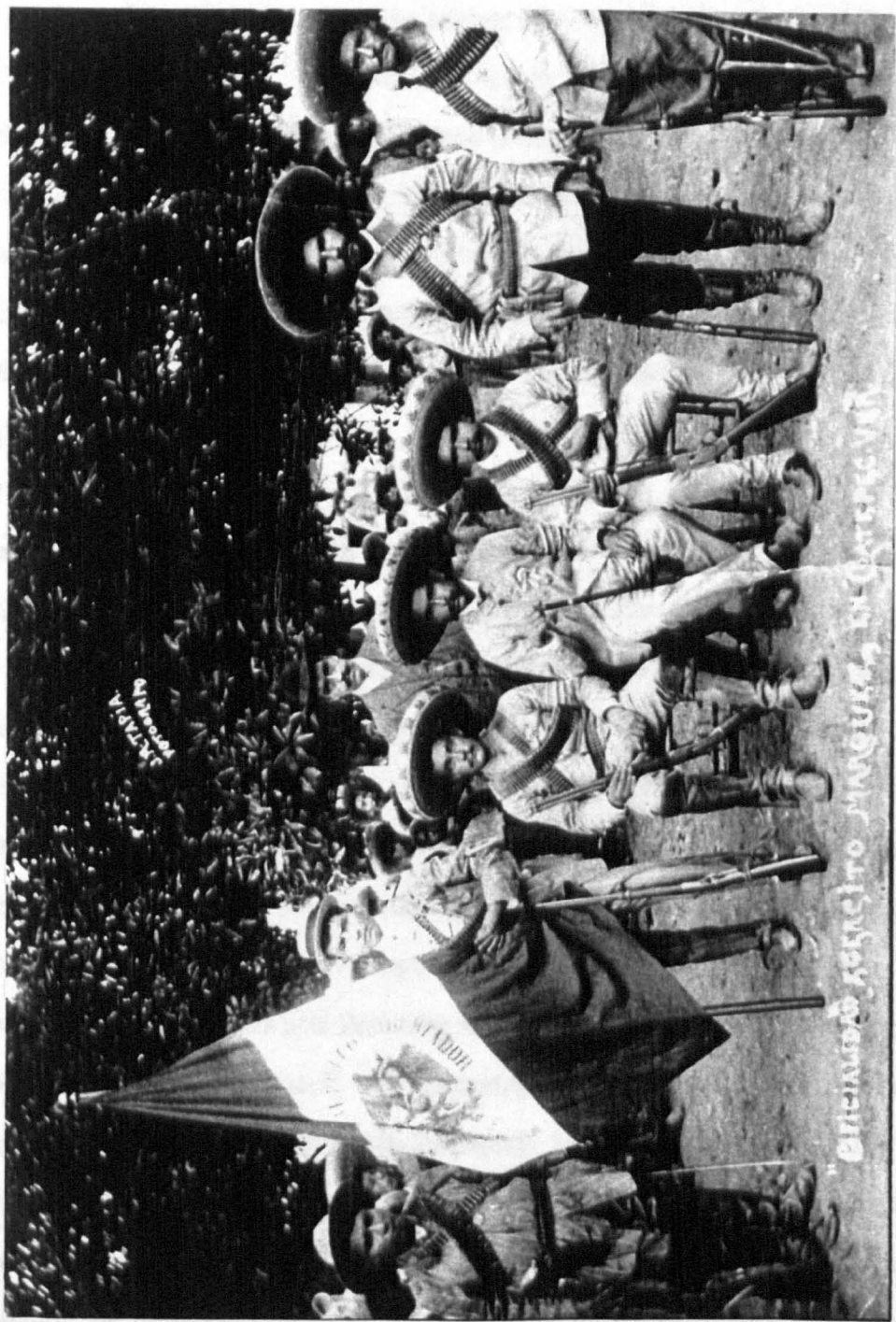


The Barrios brothers and their Indian army. (Cuacuila, Pue., 1923).

*Ethnicity and the Indian military leader*

On 6 June 1913 the Barrios brothers recruited 120 of their fellow serranos and descended the slopes to Acatlán where they enlisted in the ranks of Lucas' Brigada Serrana.<sup>11</sup> (The Brigada Serrana formed part of the Third East Division under the overall command of General Antonio Medina.) Gabriel Barrios received the rank of second captain and was placed in command of the new recruits, thereafter called the Cuacuila company.<sup>12</sup> His military career had an inauspicious start: illness determined that for the first five months he was reduced to directing his troops from his headquarters in Cuacuila. By December 1913, however, Barrios personally led his troops as a part of a greater force under the command of Colonel Gaspar Márquez in the defeat of Huertista troops in Zacatlán and Chignahuapan. The Cuacuila company continued to liaise with Márquez's forces in the Sierra, and later was deployed to various locations in the nearby *tierra caliente* of Veracruz, where its military successes earned Barrios promotion to the rank of first captain.

In December 1914 the decision of the Márquez brothers to switch their allegiance to the Conventionists prompted the Cuacuila company's return to the Sierra. During the next two years, Lucas marshalled his troops in opposition to the Márquez clan, whose headquarters at Otlatlán lay on the far side of a range of hills that separated it from Cuacuila. Previous cooperation gave way to open hostility between the dominant families of two communities that had harboured frictions for several years.<sup>13</sup> Neighbourly friction was compounded by personal revenge when, in one of the many clashes between the rival forces, Demetrio Barrios was injured and another brother, Amado, died from wounds sustained in battle.<sup>14</sup>



The Márquez brothers and their *estado mayor*. (Coatepec, Veracruz, 1914).

A brief summary of Gabriel Barrios' military record during the years of Revolution suggests that he flourished in the heat of battle. On 29 September 1915 he received the rank of major and was given command of the 'Juan N. Méndez' Battalion, one of two battalions that comprised the Brigada Serrana. (The 'Tetela de Ocampo' Battalion, was led by Lieutenant Colonel Tranquilino Quintero).<sup>15</sup> On 9 February 1917 Juan Francisco Lucas, commander of the Brigada, died and amid much grief and ceremony was buried in Tetela de Ocampo. Although Tranquilino Quintero outranked Gabriel Barrios, the Ministry of War received and accepted the news that Barrios had taken over as *jefe accidental* of the Brigada Serrana.<sup>16</sup> The Brigada Serrana continued the fight against the Márquez forces, obtaining a decisive victory on 12 August 1917 in an early morning surprise raid on Otlatlán. The attack virtually destroyed the *estado mayor* of the Conventionist forces. Esteban and Emilio Márquez were killed in combat while later the same day Barrios received orders to execute Colonel Gaspar Márquez. After the attack Barrios received immediate promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel and, with the Márquez threat eliminated, the battalion was now free to redirect its endeavours against enemies based on both flanks of the Sierra: the rebels Adampol Gaviño and Rodolfo Herrero operating in the districts of Zacatlán, Huauchinango and the stretch of land dropping to the *tierra caliente*; and the Villista forces of Salvador Vega Bernal, Rafael Alcántara and Bernardo Mora who continued to pose a threat in Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan.<sup>17</sup> By engaging the enemy in its own territory, Barrios' military jurisdiction expanded rapidly beyond its origins. By 1919 the Brigada Serrana held jurisdiction in Tetela, Zacatlán, Huauchinango, Tlatlauquitepec and Zacapoaxtla in the State of Puebla, and in the district of Papantla in Veracruz. Gabriel Barrios, together with his surviving brothers Bardoniano and Demetrio, controlled the brigade's operations in Cuacuila and Zacatlán while relatives and trusted friends were given officer ranks and placed in charge of the various units deployed throughout the Sierra. The Brigada

Serrana, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Gabriel Barrios continued its campaign against revolutionary groups and, despite subsequent accusations, no evidence exists to suggest that adherence to the Constitutionalist cause wavered until the very last days of the Carranza administration.<sup>18</sup>

Although his later successes proved him to be an impressive military tactician, present explanations appear inadequate to resolve the question of why, upon the death of Lucas, Barrios should assume military command in preference to superior mestizo officers. LaFrance implies that the brutal attack against the Márquez brothers revealed the true nature of Barrios' ambition. He sees Barrios as a cruel, deceptive leader whose relentless purge of enemies was fuelled by a ruthless personal ambition to attain power.<sup>19</sup> Yet to portray Barrios' attack as a sudden change of policy is inaccurate. Numerous earlier battles had demonstrated that Lucas saw the Márquez brothers as identified enemies rather than possible co-sponsors of a united serrano front against attacks on regional autonomy.<sup>20</sup> The attack on the Márquez forces in August 1917 was merely the continuation of a campaign launched against a recognised enemy. Days before the final assault, the Márquez brothers contacted Carranza offering a compromise in which they would go into voluntary exile and place their forces under the command of Barrios.<sup>21</sup> The Carrancista reply was the assault on the Márquez stronghold two days later, an attack ordered by Barrios' superior officers. Following the attack, a jubilant Carranza sent his congratulations to Barrios and authorised his immediate promotion.<sup>22</sup> While it is true that the victory greatly helped Barrios' ambitions as a Carrancista military commander and a local cacique, the evidence confirms that these were subsidiary benefits accrued as a result of Barrios following the orders of his superiors.

Ruthless ambition alone was insufficient to secure Gabriel Barrios' rise to supremacy. It must be remembered that had the Ministry of War wanted to



prevent Barrios from assuming command, Quintero or either of Lucas' own sons were logical options. Yet, there is clear evidence that successive administrations in Mexico City showed a reluctance to place a mestizo officer in charge of federal troops in the Sierra. Huertista generals, conducting a military appraisal of the Sierra in January 1914, concluded that it would be unwise to replace Lucas with another military commander, and that in the event of his death, neither of his two sons, Abraham and Miguel, would make a suitable replacement. The report suggested that all officers in the Brigada Serrana should be Indians, preferably from Xochiapulco, and that no '*gente de razón*', including the Márquez brothers, should assume control of the Brigade.<sup>23</sup> This bias towards Indian leadership reveals a general uncertainty that pervaded both Huertista and Carrancista armies regarding the personal and political motives of their generals. Conversely, Indian leaders may have been viewed as less concerned with global issues and, therefore, more controllable than their mestizo counterparts.

The Huertista report may have reflected more than a mistrust of mestizo intentions: for many decades, the Indian forces of this part of the Sierra had served under the command of Lucas. To replace Lucas with a mestizo would be to step into the unknown. It is doubtful whether any of the Carrancista officers choosing Lucas' successor could even speak *nahuatl*, let alone gauge the likely reaction of the brigade's Indian troops to the imposition of a mestizo commanding officer. One must remember the broader climate in which such events took place. A large sector of serrano society had long been under the paternal spell of their charismatic patron. In a period when the support of the Brigada Serrana could effectively determine the military and political balance of a crucial portion of the state of Puebla, Carrancista generals were naturally unwilling to do anything that would upset the historical precedent of troop mobilisation and control through the good offices of a cultural intermediary.

Given the delicacy of the situation in the Sierra, Carranza's refusal to accept the overtures of the Márquez faction becomes clearer: it was better to eliminate the threat than to allow the survival of a potentially volatile mestizo agent with Conventionist credentials within a region struggling to adjust to the death of Lucas.

By its very nature, the role of an intermediary has to acknowledge the expectations of both sides. Carrancista generals would not continue to support Gabriel Barrios if he failed to deliver, and Barrios could only meet this requirement if he could persuade the serrano communities that he was a worthy successor to Lucas. Thomson's work on nineteenth century recruitment in the region highlights two salient aspects: the strategic importance of gaining military control of the Sierra during periods of national crisis; and that the only decisive way of ensuring such control was to employ an intermediary who commanded respect within serrano communities and was sensitive to local values and concerns. In successfully fulfilling such a role, Lucas received considerable freedom from external interference, while his image within the Indian communities reached mythical proportions. The same issues returned during the early years of the Revolution. As with National Guardsmen fifty years earlier, serrano recruits had a tangible, local motive to join Lucas' forces. Many serranos had become tired of being the victims of arbitrary revolutionary violence and saw military recruitment as the best chance of protecting their families and communities from external pressures. Lucas' call to arms was a spectre from the past, a paternal figure who once again offered the hope of providing them with the protection they sought.

The attraction of the patriarchal figure appears to have disproportionate significance within the Sierra. Doris Slade's study of social organisation in the Nahua community of Chignautla identifies the predominance of unilineal

paternal ties common to many Nahua communities in the Sierra. Given such tendencies, Slade argues, Nahua serranos are particularly receptive to the approaches of patriarchal figures such as Juan Francisco Lucas.<sup>24</sup> As Moisés Saenz, Under-Secretary for Education, noted in his tour of the Sierra in 1926, Gabriel Barrios appeared to possess similar prestige, 'a style of benevolent feudalism, a strong and loving paternalism ...'.<sup>25</sup> There is little doubt that Barrios' style of leadership was largely determined by the nineteenth century precedents set by Lucas.

The temptation for many serranos to draw parallels between the mystical powers attributed to 'Tata Juan Francisco' and those inherited by his successor has proved irresistible. Drawing upon the investigations of Masferrer Kan, it seems feasible that leaders such as Lucas, who were able to react sensitively to local traditions, could achieve a form of legitimacy verging on reverence. González de la Rama's study of the Totonac rebellion of 1885 has one important conclusion. He argues that, at least in part, the rebel leader Díaz Monfort employed his knowledge of Indian spiritual beliefs as a means of encouraging recruitment. Of particular interest is the fact that manipulation of a common spirituality united communities across the region despite their many individual differences. In the case of Lucas, there is little doubt that secular rather than any spiritual considerations first enabled him to obtain a measure of legitimacy within serrano communities. However, as Kan's work suggests, by satisfying secular demands Lucas obtained a form of legitimacy that transcended the secular and put him into that category of leaders for which secular and spiritual reverence converged.<sup>26</sup>

Marentes Bravo's oral history of the Revolution in the Sierra lends weight to Masferrer Kan's suggestion that Lucas was accredited with shamanistic qualities. Marentes' study goes further, however, in suggesting that

Gabriel Barrios enjoyed a similar reputation among the region's revolutionary combatants.<sup>27</sup> A former servant of the Barrios household suggests that such was the esteem in which Gabriel Barrios was held by Indian serranos who knew him well, that he was seen as a god-like figure rather than a mere mortal; a paternal figure who offered protection and advice.<sup>28</sup> In both Zacatlán and Tetela, a strong lasting impression of Barrios is his extremely shrewd character; a foremost tactician who left nothing to chance. Within the Sierra, stories persist of the shadowy figure of Gabriel Barrios: a firm but fair man; a man who never appeared to need sleep; who would rest at night in one village only to appear early the next morning in another many miles away; who was rarely seen by day and who conducted secret meetings with his local commanders under cover of darkness; who was witnessed to have been in two places at the same time. Within these anecdotes, the ambiguous image of Gabriel Barrios within Nahua society is revealed. His mystical attributes display the reverential position that his paternal role earned him. However, equally apparent is his intimidatory image, anecdotes relating to his nocturnal movements betraying the Nahua spiritual association of darkness with foreboding and evil spirits.<sup>29</sup> These were the beliefs of the communities from whom Barrios sought his troops: he could not afford to ignore his Indian cultural background.

In the pragmatic world of post-revolution caudillismo, it might appear superficial to talk of supporters being attracted through cultural manipulation rather than material reward. Yet the historiography produces examples of mestizos, such as Carrillo Puerto and Juvencio Nochebuena, who realised the benefits of adapting their image to suit their Indian following.<sup>30</sup> Friedrich's study of the cacicazgo that developed during the Revolution in Zacapu, Michoacán, describes the way in which a charismatic leader, Primo Tapia, used his understanding of local cultural values to obtain a measure of legitimacy rarely attainable through the existing hierarchical structure. Friedrich describes

a man who retained the common touch: he spoke in local Tarascan dialects and lived an outwardly modest life that never threatened to distance himself from the campesinos. While strongly anti-clerical, Tapia recognised the deeply religious beliefs of the Tarascans and moved to capitalise upon the differences that existed between national Catholicism (as represented by the parish priest) and a folk religion embedded in witchcraft and magic.<sup>31</sup> A heavy drinker by nature, he had a passion for drama, music and traditional fiestas. At the height of his popularity, Primo Tapia wrote: 'such has been my influence that some of my believers even think that I perform miracles, many have seen me in Zacapu when I was in Morelia.'<sup>32</sup> In the year of his death, thirty babies and young children died of disease in the community. A year later a *naranjeña* 'confessed a secret', that the Virgin Mary had appeared to her saying that thirty *angelitos* were required for the two choirs that would sing to Primo Tapia as he entered Heaven.<sup>33</sup>

Barrios, like Lucas before him, spoke in *nahuatl* and was rarely seen in the Sierra dressed in anything other than the simple garments of a serrano peasant. Unlike his brother, Demetrio, who elected to live in Zacatlán and later developed a taste for imported consumer goods, Gabriel Barrios consistently preferred the *campo*; those who wished to consult him, mestizo officers included, were forced to use the steep mountain tracks of the campesinos. Barrios, like Primo Tapia, developed an interest in music and during his period of domination sponsored a brass band that played a strange blend of classical and traditional music from the ridge above Cuacuila that echoed eerily throughout the mountain valleys at dusk. All the musicians were Indians, instructed by the best teachers that Puebla City could provide. Their range of instruments and repertoire greatly exceeded that of other brass bands and the Cuacuila band gained an excellent reputation.<sup>34</sup> Organisers of community fiestas stood to gain much local credit by enticing the band to make an appearance.<sup>35</sup>

In a rural environment where music was, and remains, a central part of a community's social and religious life, the Cuacuila band created ties between Barrios and those influential members of a community charged with organising a fiesta. These links frequently went beyond mere goodwill and placed the organisers of fiestas under an obligation to Barrios. Such relationships proved particularly useful as the Barrios brothers began to expand their influence beyond matters of a purely military nature.

Despite their distinctly different backgrounds and few common ideological motives, Primo Tapia and Barrios were both fundamentally operating the same strategy. Their success within the Indian regions they controlled depended on their respect for, and association with, the cultural values of the Indian people: patriarchal families within hierarchical systems that afforded prestige through cargo sponsorship; societies bound by tradition; language and religious concepts which still bore pre-Columbian traits. These were common elements of both regions. By recognising and appealing to these cultural values, both Primo Tapia and Gabriel Barrios successfully reached the communities of their respective regions.

A more dispassionate interpretation of the Barrios' leadership qualities might conclude that the many aspects that helped to foster his image as a mystical leader were nothing other than sound military tactics, precautionary measures of survival within a dangerous environment. During the attack on Otlatlán in August 1917, a major factor in the victory was Barrios' tactical superiority. It is said that Esteban Márquez saw no need to place look-outs on the approaches from Cuacuila because an attack by night was not expected, and certainly not during the most severe period of the wet season.<sup>36</sup> Gabriel Barrios' son suggests that when Carranza fled Mexico City in 1920, he passed through his father's territory unscathed only because Barrios had insisted that the

presidential party was moved from one house to another under cover of darkness. He points out that had this practice continued, the ambush at Tlaxcalantongo would not have been successful.<sup>37</sup> It can be appreciated how such tactical decisions might contribute towards the 'mystification' of Barrios in the minds of Nahua communities. Sudden appearances, days of absence, nocturnal movements through the Sierra, simultaneous sightings: in a culture where barriers between the worldly and supernatural are already thin, such a reputation might easily make the leap from one to the other.

For non-Indian supporters of Gabriel Barrios, equally strong imagery was at play. The *ranchero* background of the Barrios family, as suggested by studies of rural leadership in other areas, provided Barrios with a certain local prestige. In the cabeceras of Tetela and Zacatlán, Gabriel Barrios was known and respected for his knowledge of horses. His military tactics were recognised by all and his standing as a fighter grew in line with his rapid promotion through the ranks of the *Brigada Serrana*. In time his reputation as an admirer of thoroughbred horses, was only surpassed by his even greater passion for women.<sup>38</sup> Guns, horses and women, the accoutrements of the Mexican hero, helped gain admiration among members of the non-Indian serrano society for whom mysticism had no place.

While Gabriel Barrios was far from unique in managing to persuade his fellow campesinos that he was a legitimate military leader, a constant concern for all regional leaders was the ability to retain the loyalty of their followers. In the case of Primo Tapia, the Tarascan campesinos were offered land and protection against the repression that the recent influx of hacendados had stimulated. Lucas too, had offered a form of protection. Not only did he uphold a form of local autonomy that decelerated the pressures on Indian land in the region, but he also demanded mestizo respect for the rights of Indians under

the Constitution in relation to military service. But what could Barrios offer a region that had suffered the ravages of civil war long before he was in a position to influence events?

In many regions of the Republic, mobilisation of campesinos was frequently linked to the hopes and fears raised by the prospect of local agrarian reform. However, the recruiting tactics of agrarian caudillos, such as Cedillo, Tejeda, and the cacique of Pisaflores, Otilio Villegas, were not easily transferable to the nearby Sierra de Puebla as the region was largely free from agrarian conflict. Although several families possessed significant amounts of land, the region's topography and climate inhibited large scale agriculture. Furthermore, campesinos in the Sierra had been largely successful in protecting their interests from the worst excesses of *desamortización* during the Porfiriato.<sup>39</sup> The voluntary division and sale of land on larger estates before and during the Revolution meant that many campesinos had acquired their own plots and did not share the plight of campesinos in other regions. Such influences created a general acceptance of the sacrosanct nature of private ownership and in strongly affirming such rights, the Barrios family were merely reflecting the sentiments of the majority of their fellow serranos.

More than land reform or revolutionary social change, the serranos desired, above all else, peace and stability. In the crucial few years following Lucas' death, communities were bound by a desire for a cessation to the indiscriminate violence that had so interrupted social and economic life. Sierra municipal archives abound with reports from municipal presidents relating incidents of bandits attacking settlements, robbing them of funds, horses and provisions.<sup>40</sup> In such an environment, any village that tried to maintain neutrality became the target for raids by opposing sides. Barrios' son suggests that *cuaculeños* joined Lucas' Brigada Serrana primarily to acquire an armed



presence that might deter the arbitrary demands for provisions from the Márquez troops in nearby Otlatlán.<sup>41</sup> Following the death of Lucas and the increasing strength of Barrios' military influence, to be a pro-Barrios community was to enjoy the best chance of gaining the protection required to ensure peace and stability. In the more peaceful times that followed, the prospects of material gain undoubtedly attracted support for the *cuacuileño* cacique and these links will be discussed in later chapters. But during times when the Sierra was crippled by civil turmoil, patronage once again assumed a military character.

When Gabriel Barrios assumed command of the Brigada Serrana in 1917, senior Carrancista officers were relieved of a major problem. Barrios emerged from the crowd of mourners at Lucas' funeral as the 'natural' heir to the dead native hero. The death of Lucas left a vacuum in the lives of many serranos, both mestizos and Indians. Lucas had achieved his position through serving mestizo demands while maintaining his association with Nahua traditional values. His understanding of the Nahua culture made Barrios the only feasible replacement for the great patriarch. Even Lucas' own college educated sons had lost their Nahua roots: despite their undoubted aspirations, neither they nor local mestizo leaders could hope to fill the role in the way that Barrios might.<sup>42</sup> When faced with the choice of risking the unknown consequences of imposing a mestizo military leader at the head of the Brigada Serrana, or allowing power to move to a local Indian of proven loyalty and military qualities, the Carrancista generals showed little hesitation.

*'Siempre leal': Militarism under Gabriel Barrios*

Having attained a military position which, to all intents and purposes, amounted to a direct succession to the Lucas empire, Barrios had little time to adjust to his elevated status. The anti-Carrancista threat posed by the presence of armed bands led by Márquez, Vega Bernal and others made it vital that the momentum was not lost. The fundamental requirement that successive presidents would demand of Barrios was that he should pacify the Sierra and firmly establish it as a federal government stronghold. Particularly during the presidency of Carranza, but periodically thereafter, this required Barrios to show his unfailing loyalty by reacting swiftly to emergencies that threatened the federal government. Whether Barrios succeeded can be judged by scrutinising the salient events of his military command in the Sierra and placing them in a regional and national context.

Throughout Barrios' period of military command of the Sierra, accusations of his political infidelity were never far from the surface. The sentiments of many allegations are typified by the letter sent in 1935 by citizens of Tlaxco, Tlaxcala. Responding to a rumour that Barrios might be redeployed to their region, they begged the Ministry of War to reconsider and highlighted the failings of the serrano commander:

[...] His loyalty to the Government has left much to be desired. He betrayed the government of Señor Carranza and by doing so contributed directly to his death. He alone bears the responsibility for the tragic end of President Carranza. Having received great quantities of money to organise forces to be placed at the disposal of the Government, these funds were taken to make Barrios a profiteer and a speculator[...]. During the Delahuerta movement, [Barrios] assumed a similar role, vacillating in his support for General Obregón's government when he considered its future to be threatened, and maintaining contact with the enemy in order that he might switch sides if the conflict resulted in defeat for the federal government. [...] During the Serrano and Gomista movement, when he was forced to act under the command of other military officers, [Barrios] was prevented from assuming his usual tactic of vacillation. During the Escobar movement, however, he was once more witnessed to be covering all eventualities, since he received various representatives from the rebel leader.<sup>43</sup>

This picture of corruption, infidelity and vacillation would have come as no surprise to a contemporary observer of Mexican affairs, Ernest Gruening. In his analysis of Mexican political events written in 1927, Gruening offered a jaundiced image of the Mexican army whose officers, he concluded, were almost all driven by one characteristic: treachery.<sup>44</sup> This criticism was no doubt heavily influenced by ceaseless internal divisions within the army; each one threatening to drag Mexico once more into widespread violent turmoil. Gruening suggests that the divisions within the Carrancista forces between Carranza on one side and the Sonora group on the other only compounded inherent weaknesses in an army that had always suffered a history of dishonourable behaviour. Garciadiego portrays a Carrancista army characterised by indiscipline and corruption, with generals being constantly moved from one region to another not for any military reasons but to stop the chance of collusion between supposed enemy forces. While reform of the armed forces may have been desirable, to conduct such reform at a time of national instability was particularly hazardous. Any anti-corruption campaign that dramatically threatened Carrancista officers also risked splitting the army and would probably have achieved little but augment the numbers in the enemy camp. Carranza's only realistic option was damage limitation. Even if corruption could not be eradicated, he could act to ensure that those military officers in crucial positions were least likely to betray him.<sup>45</sup>

The opportunism of local military leaders was a necessity of military life in the Revolution. Within a national political environment governed by the varying military fortunes of the different groups, those generals who stood the best chance of surviving the Revolution were those who correctly judged the time to transfer allegiances. Carranza's policy of switching his generals from one region to another was not without cost. During the seven years that Barrios fought under the Constitutionalist banner, command of the *Jefatura de*

*Operaciones Militares* in Puebla frequently changed hands. While the tactic reduced the likelihood of a regional military consensus to challenge Carranza's authority, as Garciadiego points out, the need to limit the threat of treason was achieved only by sacrificing military effectiveness.

One of the consequences of such a policy was that generals were sent to the Sierra de Puebla possessing little or no understanding of the land or its people. In a plea from Governor Alfonso Cabrera to Carranza, the president was asked to intervene in the deployment of General M. Arrieta to the Sierra. Cabrera suggested that Arrieta's lack of tact had caused great resentment among serranos and threatened to drive them towards supporting the enemy.<sup>46</sup> Conversely, correspondence relating to General Antonio Medina, who had been commander of military operations in Northern Puebla some years earlier, provides an example of the dangers of keeping officers in one region for any extended period. Carranza received a letter from the local authorities in Tetela informing him that soldiers acting under the direct orders of Medina had descended upon the town and kidnapped several leading members of the community. This act, they claimed, was causing widespread indignation verging on open revolt. In a subsequent letter of explanation, it became clear that Medina was embroiled in a local political dispute: he suggested that he was the victim of a political vendetta by his enemies who had incited Brigada Serrana troops to insubordination and rebellion.<sup>47</sup> The atmosphere of mistrust that pervaded the Carrancista forces is shown in a subsequent letter from Medina to the Ministry of War, in which he stated that he could not complete his duties satisfactorily unless all the troops in his military jurisdiction were placed under his command. Medina further asked that neighbouring Carrancista forces should be made to co-operate more fully in any military operation that he considered necessary.<sup>48</sup> Carrancista forces in Puebla were no different from their

counterparts in other regions; confusion and mistrust often replaced professionalism.

Any attempt to discern the true political sympathies of the Barrios family during this period is clouded by the number of unsubstantiated claims lodged by their opponents. During his period as a Carrancista, such accusations never seriously suggested collaboration with Villista or Zapatista groups, rather they concentrated more on alleged corruption. Ironically, following the fall of Carranza, Gabriel Barrios' apparent loyalty as a Carrancista officer led to speculation that he was planning to give support to a Sierra based rebellion led by Alfonso and Luis Cabrera.<sup>49</sup> During the Sonorense administrations, when every military revolt could count upon the support of rebels based in, or near, the Sierra de Puebla, the character of accusations against Barrios changed from those of corruption to alleged complicity in rebel activity. Local authorities in Cuetzalan accused Barrios of political assassinations, of openly courting local Delahuertistas and of supporting Angel Flores in his presidential campaign against Calles in 1924. Lending weight to their argument, the Puebla governor Claudio Tirado entered into lengthy correspondence with President Calles giving details of the abuses and political interference of Barrios forces and accusing Barrios of being 'in open opposition to the state government creating a state of anarchy so serious and delicate as to warrant radical and decisive action that only you can order'.<sup>50</sup>

Throughout the years that the Barrios brothers controlled the Sierra, the Ministry of War sent various commissions to investigate charges made by Tirado and others, and to make more general reviews of the prevailing military situation.<sup>51</sup> The first of these commissions took place during the months immediately following the death of Carranza and resulted in Obregón's confirmation of Barrios as the military commander of the Sierra. This was

despite various allegations by the incumbent military officers that Barrios had refused to recognise the Obregón government and was inciting serranos to rebel. Statements from senior officers at the *Jefatura* in Puebla, however, confirmed that Barrios had made a public declaration in support of the Plan de Agua Prieta and that, in the interests of peace, he had voluntarily withdrawn his troops to their barracks in Cuacuila and Xochiapulco.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, while the report highlighted the potential threat that Barrios' forces represented and suggested that it might be prudent to dismantle the Brigada Serrana, Obregón placed his faith in Barrios and, instead, set about the demobilisation of the ex-Villista forces that had previously warned that the Barrios brothers could not be trusted.<sup>53</sup>

As the virulent accusations made in the letter from Tlaxco demonstrate, the relatively smooth transition that the Barrios brothers made from Carranza to Obregón nonetheless established a platform from which all future charges imputing their loyalty were launched. Such accusations support LaFrance's conclusion that, following the death of Lucas, ideology was replaced by cynical opportunism as Gabriel Barrios became primarily concerned with empire building. Yet Barrios' actions defy simple analysis. Unlike Knight's *serrano* movements that were primarily concerned with preserving regional autonomy, the Sierra went in a different direction.<sup>54</sup> LaFrance admits that the Sierra under Barrios did not turn inwards: Barrios was either unable or unwilling to isolate the region. Conversely, the area experienced an acceleration of a process of change which had begun before the Revolution. By the time of his death, the cherished autonomy that Lucas had fought to maintain was frail, perhaps non-existent. The Revolution had contributed to mestizo penetration of the Sierra. While this process was not sufficiently advanced to make Barrios' role as cultural intermediary redundant, neither could Barrios use his mediation to

forestall further integration in the way that Lucas had attempted to do in the past.

From a purely practical perspective, previous erosion of the region's autonomy meant that Gabriel Barrios could not vacillate in his support for one side or another in the way that Lucas had previously done. As in other areas, the Ministry of War made increasing demands upon local leaders such as Barrios. With military leaders being exposed to the vagaries of revolutionary politics, new skills were needed to anticipate and reflect changes in the political environment. If a military leader was to retain his influence, pragmatism had to replace ideology; the revolutionary years were strewn with dead heroes who had chosen to follow their convictions.

Gabriel Barrios' denial of Carranza is an issue which was frequently cited as a prime example of Barrios' political cynicism and disloyalty. The tenor of this attack is reflected in the sentiments expressed by the residents of Tlaxco in 1935; that Barrios was a traitor and bore a major responsibility for his president's death.<sup>55</sup> However, Carranza's daughter Julia, placed no direct blame upon the cacique for her father's death.<sup>56</sup> Others still, point to the dilemma that Barrios faced: should he commit his troops in an uneven battle to protect a president whose powers had already been eclipsed?<sup>57</sup> In the event, Barrios neither deserted nor helped his president. In refusing to meet Carranza, he avoided the possibility of personally betraying the president for whom he had fought during the past seven years. Barrios was no hero: he side-stepped the issue. Instead, Barrios used his influence to keep the presidential party informed of their pursuers' whereabouts. In doing so he conveyed the president safely across his region and avoided the inevitable loss of life that would have occurred had he and his troops made a stand. Simultaneously, although Barrios may not have complied fully with Obregón's orders to stop Carranza, his actions did

leave the door open for the Aguaprietistas to accept his declaration of allegiance.<sup>58</sup> As events soon confirmed, Barrios managed to weather the political storm and convince the new administration that his future now lay in loyalty to Obregón, rather than with any Carrancista diehard.

The next crucial test of his loyalty to the federal government hinged upon his response to the Delahuerta rebellion. The weakness of General Almazán's federal military authority in Puebla City was exposed by their untimely withdrawal from the city when confronted by the rebel forces of General Maycotte in early December 1923. The rebels' failure to consolidate their grip on Puebla City and use it as a base to launch an attack on the national capital, owed much to Almazán's successful counter-attack using vital reinforcements from Tlaxcala. The presence of these extra troops was a crucial factor in preventing a Delahuerta military assault on Mexico City.

As had happened so many times in Mexico's history, the strategic importance of the Sierra was revealed. Had Barrios led his men into rebellion, then the Delahuerta army in the East could have mounted a broad, unbroken line of combat: from the borders of Oaxaca, where Higinio Aguilar's forces lay, to Maycotte's troops pushing through the Mexico/Veracruz corridor, and Barrios' forces uniting with others in the Sierra and Veracruz coast. From the Sierra, Barrios' forces, only hours from Tlaxcala, could have mounted a challenge of such strength as to deplete seriously the reinforcements upon whom Almazán's counter-attack depended. By remaining loyal, Barrios considerably reduced the chances of a successful Delahuerta assault on Mexico City.

While his accusers alleged that Barrios had colluded with Delahuertistas in order to establish a position of accommodation in the event of their rebellion being successful, the speed and tenacity of his forces' response against these



same rebels prove otherwise. Far from displaying hesitancy, military reports suggest that the Barrios brothers led a comprehensive campaign against Delahuertistas, from Perote in the state of Veracruz, to the borders of Hidalgo. Even had Gabriel Barrios been tempted towards a more neutral stance, the personal tragedy caused by the death of his brother in a battle against the Delahuerta general, Cavazos, made it inconceivable that any accord would be found in the future.<sup>59</sup> The death of Bardomiano Barrios Cabrera in December 1923 bore to the heart of the Barrios cacicazgo. Bardomiano, together with his younger brother Demetrio, had taken a leading role in the organisation of troops in Zacatlán. With Gabriel Barrios conducting operations from Cuacuila, the three brothers formed an intimate *estado mayor* from which a clear and unified policy emerged. There was no time to mourn the loss of Bardomiano. Demetrio immediately assumed overall responsibility for affairs in Zacatlán and the pattern of future responsibilities within the cacicazgo was set. With much of the cacique network having been established, Demetrio took over routine operations while Gabriel Barrios confirmed his seniority by concentrating more upon broader military and political strategies.

Ironically, Barrios' troops found themselves confronting Delahuertista officers who, in 1920, were the same ex-Villistas who had advised Obregón of Barrios' dubious loyalty. It appears that Obregón's judgement of loyalties in 1920 was vindicated by later events. As early as October 1922, the *Jefe de las Operaciones Militares* in Veracruz reported that Lindoro Hernández and others were showing signs of rebellion and were receiving financial support from several oil companies. The report added that public feeling in Cuetzalan suggested that Salvador Vega Bernal was dissatisfied with the government and was only biding time before rebelling.<sup>60</sup> In reality, the gulf-facing slopes of the Sierra had never been completely free from hostilities since the death of Carranza. Although Obregón had eventually disbanded Vega Bernal's forces,

his followers continued to exercise political and military influence in Cuetzalan and in the adjacent *tierra caliente* region of Veracruz. Throughout 1922 various reports emanating from Barrios' headquarters gave details of ex-General Vega Bernal's movements throughout the *tierra caliente*, which included meetings with his disbanded revolutionary troops and with rebel leaders such as ex-general Antonio Medina.<sup>61</sup> Medina, according to rumours published in *El Monitor*, had rebelled against the federal government in the Sierra de Zacapoaxtla.<sup>62</sup> His actions validated the rumour and during the months that followed, Medina's rebels sustained a campaign on the *llanos* of Puebla consisting of raids on haciendas and communication links. They continued to cause problems in the region until Medina was eventually killed in May 1922 while leading a raid on a hacienda near Chalchicomula.<sup>63</sup>

Across the Sierra in Villa Juárez, General Lindoro Hernández typified the intrigue and mistrust that continued to pervade the federal army.<sup>64</sup> In early 1923, federal troops led by General Juan A. Almazán, which included Barrios forces, waged a guerrilla war against Hernández and his men who were in apparent revolt against the government. Hernández went into hiding and later expressed his loyalty to the federal government explaining that his campaign was not a rebellion but a local dispute against his personal enemy, ex-general Rodolfo Herrero (Carranza's alleged assassin). Further clashes between Barrios' and Hernández' troops occurred in November 1923, yet when De la Huerta launched his rebellion, Hernández promptly placed his forces at the service of the federal government and appealed to Calles for funds with which to pay them. Simultaneously, Calles received reports casting doubt on the loyalty of Hernández. Acting cautiously, Calles ordered Hernández to place himself and his troops at the disposal of military authorities in Tulancingo where the required funds would be made available to him.<sup>65</sup>

This maze of ambiguous signals, the tangle of local and national interests and conflicts, had plagued regional stability during the Carrancista years and continued after his fall. Beyond the Sierra de Puebla, other events were contributing to a rising atmosphere of mistrust. Obregón provided General Maycotte with \$200,000 with which to fight the rebellion in Oaxaca, only to learn in December 1923, that Maycotte had promptly switched sides and was using the federal funds to support, rather than defeat, the rebels.<sup>66</sup> Such a betrayal would have done little to encourage trust in regional generals like Hernández. Mistrust, however, had to be balanced by the federal government's need to ensure that its own response would not deter genuine offers of support, or worse still, turn hitherto loyal military leaders towards the enemy camp. In Gabriel Barrios' case, there is no evidence to suggest that the federal government hesitated in providing him with the necessary material support. When rebellion finally broke in December 1923, Barrios swiftly expressed his loyalty to the Obregón administration and was given permission to increase his troop numbers to 1000. So effectively did he use them that, by June 1924, Barrios was pleased to report that the Delahuerta threat in the Sierra had been extinguished.<sup>67</sup>

As the letter of accusation from Tlaxco citizens correctly relates, when the ill-fated Serrano rebellion was launched, Barrios was given little opportunity to display anything but absolute loyalty to the federal government. On 2 October 1927 the president informed the *Jefatura de Operaciones Militares* in Puebla that General Arnulfo R. Gómez had left Mexico City and was expected to launch a rebellion in either Puebla or Veracruz. The following day Barrios received orders to bring his troops immediately to Puebla City in order to quell any attempted rebellion.<sup>68</sup> Upon receiving news of the rebellion, Barrios sent a telegramme to Calles expressing his loyalty. Barrios asked for, and received, permission to recruit volunteer auxiliary forces to fortify the various garrisons of

the 46th. Battalion. Throughout the emergency, Barrios liaised with neighbouring federal forces in Veracruz and Hidalgo in countering rebel movements.<sup>69</sup> Again, the swift deployment of Barrios' troops and the willingness of superior officers to allow him to recruit suggest that the loyalty of Barrios and his battalion was never questioned.

Not one of the military investigations commissioned by the Ministry of War found sufficient proof that Barrios ever contradicted Lucas' death-bed orders that he should always remain loyal to the federal government.<sup>70</sup> Military reports generally concluded that accusations of disloyalty and corruption against Barrios were made by his political and personal enemies within the Sierra who would benefit from Barrios' removal.<sup>71</sup> The political dog-fight within the Sierra which stimulated many of these accusations, and in which Barrios was unquestionably involved, is the topic of a later chapter. However the evidence suggests that in his military actions, at least, Barrios remained loyal to the federal government and that, in return, a large measure of trust and freedom was earned by the commander of the 46th. Battalion.

### *The need for military reform*

If accusations of disloyalty and subversion against the Barrios brothers proved largely unfounded, the charges of corruption would not have taken the Ministry of War completely by surprise. As Gruening comments, Calles faced difficulties in reforming the army because it was:

[...] a collection of chieftains, if one wishes to speak in terms of the Indian lineage, or of robber barons, if one prefers the Spanish analogy. Certainly it had no relation to that modern institution, the State. Not Mexico, but where the pesos were - that was their fatherland.<sup>72</sup>

Gruening despairs at the folly displayed by consecutive administrations who, rather than tackle corruption at source, preferred to buy the loyalty of their senior military staff. Gruening mocks Carranza's decision to place General Juan Barragán as head of the Ministry of War, accusing him of being the most corrupt member of a thoroughly corrupt administration.<sup>73</sup> The links between dishonesty and indiscipline are not hard to envisage. Regional generals, local commanders and company paymasters all had access to federal funds and many were not above making the most of their privileged positions to enrich themselves. Little appeared sacred as officer rankings went to the highest bidder and arms were sold to the enemy in order to extend the period during which the gravy train might continue.<sup>74</sup> This inevitably reduced the funds available to pay the troops; the absence of wages quickly fostered low morale, with troops resorting to pilfering or desertion in order to survive.

If Luis Cabrera was correct in asserting that Carranza lacked sufficient time to develop a remedy to the major problem of military unprofessionalism, then Gruening suggests that the question had not dawned on Obregón.<sup>75</sup> The folly shown by Obregón in allowing corrupt revolutionary generals back into the fold was crowned in 1922, Gruening suggests, by the appointment of a pathological gambler, General Francisco Serrano, to the Ministry of War.<sup>76</sup> According to the critical opinions of Gruening, only with the appointment of General Joaquín Amaro did the Sonorense attempts at reform begin to have effect: only then did the regional generals begin to yield to the strict reform and anti-corruption measures implemented by the disciplinarian at the Ministry.<sup>77</sup>

Reform had, of course, begun long before Amaro's appointment by president Calles. Lozoya describes the massive demobilisation during the Obregón presidency which encouraged soldiers to exchange guns for ploughs.<sup>78</sup> While this pattern of land reform and military colonisation provoked other

problems, the initiative was indicative of an attempt to streamline and professionalise a corrupt, and often unreliable, army. This reform included a warning issued by the Ministry of War that any officer found guilty of defrauding the federal government would face immediate dismissal.<sup>79</sup> In a different approach, the Ministry distributed manuals, such as the one written by General Gómez in 1924, that promoted military professionalism and emphasised the need to educate the rank and file.<sup>80</sup>

Within the Sierra one of the most prevalent recollections of the Barrios brothers' period of military control was the strict disciplinary code they imposed upon their troops. This portrayal directly contradicts accusations that Barrios troops were guilty of all manner of unruly and abusive behaviour.<sup>81</sup> Before investigating possible reasons for such ambiguity, it is worth reflecting, once more, upon the Indian nature of the Barrios forces. As in Lucas' period of influence, military service under Barrios displayed a fundamentally local character. Discipline was not obtained by careful adherence to daily instructions as prescribed in military manuals written in Spanish, or by appealing to a soldier's sense of patriotism. Discipline lay more in the traditional channels of respect that serrano communities held for patriarchal figures such as Lucas and Barrios.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, many of the soldiers in the 46th. Battalion were the sons of men that Barrios had chosen as his trusted representatives at the municipal level. Loyalty of such soldiers, therefore, was tied into a complicated web of patronage influenced by practical considerations as well as tradition.

Nonetheless, the sheer number of complaints against Barrios' forces suggests that discipline was never as complete as it might have been. Much of the confusion regarding the actions of these troops relates to the fact that it was by no means clear who constituted a regular soldier. Provided the Barrios brothers remained loyal, the Ministry of War ignored the finer details of their

recruitment policy. Although the brothers received federal funds to pay the wages of all those present at reviews, Barrios' troops were paid only for the days in which they were required for military duties; for the remainder of their time, these 'soldiers' returned to their campesino activities. This is not particularly surprising: the National Guard units had worked on a similar basis, and, in maintaining a soldier's links with his land and family, military service was not so onerous as to cause conflict between the duties of a soldier and those expected of him within the family and the community. During the more violent years of the Revolution, a soldier's pay acted as a considerable incentive. When widespread violence diminished, these veterans of the Revolution were often willing to resume their peace-time agricultural activities, only reverting to military status in emergencies or during visits from the Ministry of War's inspectorate.

Furthermore, as these 'soldiers' returned to their communities, they were often formed into *cuerpos voluntarios*, charged with the responsibility for keeping the peace in their localities. As will be explored in the following chapter, geographic expansion of the cacicazgo meant that the Barrios brothers were forced to employ peace-keeping forces that had not served in a more formal military capacity. Further away from the heart of the cacicazgo in Zacatlán, it became increasingly difficult to control the everyday actions of these groups. While the distinction was academic to the victims of such atrocities, in assessing the military discipline that the brothers tried to instil upon their regular troops, many accusations were wrongly attributed to a federal army unit that later earned a reputation for its discipline and obedience.

Despite many internal investigations carried out by Barrios himself, and others by the *Jefatura* in Puebla, the 46th. Battalion was never censured for any major breaches of discipline during its period of control in the Sierra. This is

not to say that such abuses never occurred. A proportion of the accusations were probably fabricated: it has already been observed how political enemies accused Barrios and his forces of disloyalty to the federal government. A further tactic in their attempt to discredit Barrios was to gather the grievances of others and, at times, manufacture some of their own, to create the impression that Barrios was in command of an unruly battalion which was guilty of numerous abuses of power.<sup>83</sup> It seems inconceivable, however, that Barrios was as free from guilt as the lack of convictions suggests. The failure to punish Barrios and his men probably reflects an unwillingness within the *Jefatura* to investigate charges and a degree of naivety on the part of investigating officers when they did pursue complaints. Serranos frequently refused to appear at proceedings in Puebla, many lacking the means to make such a journey. Others were intimidated by the thought of giving evidence before a tribunal conducted in a language other than their own: others still, feared reprisals from those they accused.<sup>84</sup> Such individuals would have been unmoved by promises made in Puebla City that their constitutional guarantees would be respected.

### *The Ali-Baba of the Sierra Norte!*

The process of federal military reform was necessarily moderate, because for much of the 1920s the federal government had little direct influence over regional military chieftains. Perhaps for similar reasons, Barrios was never indicted for the other major charge against his rule: corruption. The most eloquent, certainly the most flamboyant, accusation of corruption made against Barrios came from Alejandro Berriozábal, sent to the Ministry of War in April 1920. In a lengthy letter, Berriozábal permits himself to launch the 'I accuse' against Barrios and advises the Ministry that:



[...] the actions of the most hardened criminal are insignificant compared to those committed by this troglodyte. The famous Rufiar, would be jealous of this modern robber.

After listing the murders committed by Barrios troops Berriozábal accuses Barrios of using intimidation to accrue a fortune including;

[...] magnificent urban properties in Tetela and Zacatlán and enviable country estates: this new Alí-Baba boast a fortune which includes \$100,000 in coins and \$200,000 in gold [...].<sup>85</sup>

Obregón's administration took the charges seriously enough to order a military investigation. Despite exhaustive efforts throughout the municipalities of Zacatlán and Tetela, together with notices published in the *Diario Oficial*, no evidence was produced to suggest that Señor Berriozábal was living, or had ever lived in the Sierra Norte.<sup>86</sup> Without the accuser's appearance before the tribunal to ratify his accusations, the tribunal was left with no alternative but to find Barrios innocent of all charges.<sup>87</sup>

The tactic of anonymous accusations against Barrios was a frequent, yet ultimately, futile exercise. Barrios' value to his military and political superiors demanded that firmer evidence was needed to remove him from command. Indeed, the more obviously contrived accusations deflected the Ministry of War's gaze from Barrios' more flagrant abuses. The non-payment of soldiers and the falsification of review lists in order to inflate troop numbers was commonly employed. Two of the many anonymous letters sent to the Ministry of War claimed to be from members of Barrios' own forces. They specifically mention the practice of employing civilians to pose as soldiers during reviews in return for a small fee, while regular soldiers were paid only 4 to 5 pesos a month and lived in their communities unless required for campaigns.<sup>88</sup>

Another tactic allegedly used by Barrios was brought to light by the mother of second lieutenant Vulfrano Luna, one of Barrios' officers killed in battle in April 1919. Even though she was able to produce documentary evidence of her son's death, she complained that his name continued to appear on the review lists, thus preventing her from receiving the war pension to which she was entitled.<sup>89</sup> An investigation was ordered but no records exist of the outcome. This may have been an administrative oversight by Barrios' staff. Barrios' son, however, suggests a motive that seems more plausible. He refers to his father's preference for placing members of his own family in positions of authority in order to ensure troop discipline. He suggests that the only way Barrios could quickly deploy his brothers and many half-brothers into such positions without military training, was for the brothers to assume the identity of officers killed in battle.<sup>90</sup>

The Barrios brothers, therefore, were not among that rare breed of Mexican officer that was free from corruption. It was widely believed that through the good offices of Carranza's finance minister, Luis Cabrera, the Carranza administration fed generous quantities of arms and ammunitions into the Sierra to strengthen Barrios' position. This flow of goodwill and provisions continued under both Obregón and Calles and reflects the delicacy of the Sonorenses' relationship with their military officers. As Garciadiego suggests, it was a very fine balance between reducing military expenditure to ease the economy, while retaining a military deterrent sufficient to safeguard social and political stability: the only true solution to long term economic recovery. As the frequent rebellions of the 1920s illustrated, there was no shortage of disgruntled officers willing to express their grievances in a forceful way, and sweeping cuts in the military budget threatened to exacerbate, rather than solve, the dilemma.

The military aspect of the Barrios cacicazgo's relationship with the federal government appears clear: the Barrios family promised loyal support and the federal government, in return, allowed them a degree of regional autonomy and cast a blind eye to many of the details of military expenses incurred. Such a conclusion, however, is confounded by some of Gabriel Barrios' actions. On 10 December 1917 the Ministry of War awarded Barrios a 'Mención Honorífica' in acknowledgement of the gratitude of the Ministry for the efficient re-organisation of the Brigada Serrana, which had resulted in Barrios returning \$60,000 of federal funds judged surplus to requirements.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, in September 1920, Lieutenant Colonel A. Gaxiola Jr., *Jefe del Estado Mayor*, received a request from Barrios to make a troop reduction of 300 men, in order to 'benefit the financial position of the Republic'.<sup>92</sup> Again in June 1924, President Obregón received a letter from Barrios which referred to a previous order allowing him to augment his troop numbers to meet the Delahuerta challenge in the Sierra. Barrios was pleased to announce that the Sierra was now under his total control and offered a troop reduction from 1000 to 609 men in order to aid the Republic's economic situation. Obregón was delighted to accept the offer and in confirming the reduction expressed his deep gratitude to Barrios for the 'spirit of cooperation shown by reducing the numbers of [his] troops [...]'.<sup>93</sup>

Given that Barrios was not above the unauthorised use of military funds, one could be excused for making a slightly cynical analysis of these voluntary financial sacrifices. At a time when the Ministry of War was re-doubling its efforts to reduce corruption, Barrios may have been trying to divert attention from the extent of the fraud he was accused of perpetrating. The refund of \$60,000 to Carranza was met with derision in some quarters, stimulating at least three anonymous letters indicating that if Barrios was serious about saving money for the nation he could end his fraudulent recruitment programme. By

doing so, they suggested, public security of the region would remain unaltered, while the savings to the nation would not be \$60,000 but \$160,000. The complaints expressed anger that Barrios had received commendation for defrauding the nation by \$100,000.<sup>94</sup>

If Barrios' motives in 1917 remain speculative, his ambitions three years later were more transparent. Barrios' offer came at a crucial time, with Obregón's generals deciding who would make the most effective military leader in the Sierra. Barrios' proposal served as a timely reminder that he remained as an efficient, patriotic, military leader. Regarding troop reductions in 1924, 1000 troops was indeed an extraordinary high number for a battalion more accustomed to a complement of half this number. In an environment of uncertain loyalties, Barrios may well have assessed that the hurried recruitment of extra troops to meet the Delahuerta crisis had swollen the size of his forces to the point that he might not be able adequately to control their actions. A continuing high level of militarisation within his zone was undesirable as it served only to increase the possibility of armed resistance against the Barrios family's authority. In this light, such an offer can be seen as a shrewd measure taken to diminish possible threats to his control of the area, while enhancing his own reputation among military and political superiors.

Perhaps such suspicion of Gabriel Barrios' motives is unnecessarily harsh. After all, there are many testimonies to Barrios' efficiency, his distaste of waste, and unswerving loyalty to the recognised government. This scenario does not exclude the possibility that Barrios was a shrewd calculator of circumstance: during the 1920s his military duties were increasingly augmented by his initiatives to attract federal funds for regional development. How much more easily could Barrios have obtained such funds, if he had first won the confidence of his superiors within the same cabinet? Barrios may well have

appreciated that in an environment of military rebellion, there was more than one road that led to government funding. To rely completely upon his prowess as a military leader at a time when the army was undergoing major reform may have appeared imprudent. By diversifying into activities that promised to produce results very much in line with the aims of government policy, Barrios hoped to underline his usefulness to the government. A clean military record could only serve to strengthen his hold over the Sierra.

### *More than a soldier*

The regional isolation that had characterised the Sierra's history since conquest was, by the end of the nineteenth century, facing an unprecedented challenge. Yet mestizo economic migration into the region was sporadic and too recent to have eroded cultural barriers and ethnicity remained an important factor during the post-revolutionary years. In the summer of 1919, the non-Indian minority population of Cuetzalan issued several warnings that the 'ignorant Indian troops' controlled by the Barrios family were targeting the property of '*gente de razón*', and expressed fears that they were becoming the victims of a caste war.<sup>95</sup> A year later, a spate of similar complaints emanated from the municipalities of Chiconcuautla, Tlaola and Zacatlán from non-Indians who feared a war of extermination against their race.<sup>96</sup> A military commission held in 1923 recognised the overwhelming Indian character of Barrios' battalion,<sup>97</sup> while in 1930, the Puebla newspaper *La Opinión* reported the transfer of the 'well armed half-savages' to Mexico City, leaving behind a campesino population that still lived in caves and walked around semi-naked.<sup>98</sup>

Undoubtedly, Gabriel Barrios had assumed control of Lucas' military following, a force that was overwhelmingly Indian in character. Throughout the

Revolution and the years that followed, this ethnic consideration was used by sections of the non-Indian serrano society to attack Barrios' position in the Sierra. The caste war charge was, of course, absurd. A sustained campaign against the non-Indian population in the Sierra never occurred under Barrios and many of Barrios' most trusted allies were non-Indians. It is true, however, that the majority of the military leaders against whom Barrios fought, such as Márquez, Vega Bernal and Hernández, were mestizos in charge of predominantly mestizo forces. Therefore, the nature of Barrios' military duties may have led, in some quarters, to the false conclusion that militarism in the Sierra was influenced by ethnic rather than political criteria. *La Opinión's* comments a decade later should be set within the broader background of federal government initiatives to incorporate all ethnic groups within an homogeneous Mexican nation. Politicians in Puebla City directly linked the alleged savagery of the Indian serranos to the fact that the Barrios family had blocked revolutionary change and kept the Sierra's communities in isolation and ignorance.

In 1917, ethnicity had been a vital factor in Barrios' rise to prominence. He assumed military command of a region that was still largely inaccessible to mestizo commanders. As Lucas had done before him, Barrios was able to find room for manoeuvre. Lucas attracted support by providing the serranos with autonomy and protection from the worse excesses of external mestizo influences. In a changed environment, Barrios offered something even more precious: peace and stability. During the darkest periods of turmoil, the finer ideals of the Revolution became lost in the more immediate need to seek protection from indiscriminate violence.

The vital difference between Lucas and Barrios was, however, that the role of the intermediary had become increasingly demanding. While Barrios

strove to maintain a traditionally based legitimacy within the serrano communities, political and military instability called for an ever more demonstrative display of loyalty to the federation. Only by firmly identifying himself within the federal camp was Barrios allowed to remain at the helm and to steer the course of serrano development. The military response of Barrios to this demand for loyalty was overwhelming: in every major crisis facing the federal government, Barrios' forces reacted swiftly and efficiently in securing their region for the government.

In time, Barrios' area of jurisdiction greatly exceeded that occupied by Lucas in the previous century. The focal point of Barrios' influence remained in Cuacuila, where he was the natural leader, such as Lucas had been in Xochiapulco during the 1850s. Yet the more Barrios' influence extended beyond this base, the less he was able to rely on his prestige as Lucas' successor. The demands of his superiors that he should establish, and maintain, public security and stability throughout his region required that he employ different methods to satisfy these obligations. His enemies alleged that Barrios only succeeded in this by the use of brutal repression. His friends countered that his control was achieved through cooperation and progressive development programmes. In either case, the vital element that enabled Barrios to retain control over this extensive area of the Sierra de Puebla was not his use of regular soldiers, but the deployment of a network of trusted men who were directly responsible to himself: the *jefes de armas*. This network sheds light on how Barrios managed to convert his military role into a dominance that penetrated the entire social fabric of many serrano communities.

## Footnotes for Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> For nineteenth century military recruitment, see: Thomson, 'Popular Aspects of Liberalism'; 'Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism'; 'Agrarian Conflict'; 'Montaña and Llanura'; 'Los indios y el servicio militar'; LaFrance & Thomson, 'Juan Francisco Lucas: Patriarch of the Sierra Norte de Puebla'.

For a more general description of the composition and weaknesses within the federal army at the onset of the Revolution, see: Hernández Chávez, A., 'Origen y ocaso del ejército porfiriano', in *Historia Mexicana*, 39 (1989-90), pp. 257-296.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, 'Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism', p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-48; Thomson, 'Los indios y el servicio militar', pp. 206-399.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson, 'Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism', pp. 39-43.  
For an interesting analysis of the nature of popular liberalism in the Sierra de Puebla during this period see: Mallon, *Peasant and nation*.

<sup>5</sup> Thomson, 'Agrarian Conflict', pp. 205-58.

<sup>6</sup> Thomson, 'Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism', p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> AMT de O, Caja 419.

For testimonies relating to the mythical qualities that Indians believed Lucas possessed, see:

Masferrer Kan, E., 'Religion y Política en la Sierra Norte de Puebla' in *América Indígena*, XLVI:3, 1986, pp. ? ; Marentes Bravo, C., *Relatos Revolucionarios*.

<sup>8</sup> Thomson & LaFrance, 'El resurgimiento del caciquismo', pp. 262-63.

<sup>9</sup> Paré, 'Inter-ethnic and class relations', pp. 377-420.

Paré describes the increasing demand for land among mestizos during the early twentieth century, a demand that was stimulated by the profitability of coffee production. She suggests that this influx of mestizos had a fundamental impact on the socio-economic structure of the region.

<sup>10</sup> For details of Barrios' recruitment into the Brigada Serrana and his early military action, see: ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 6, ff. 1274, 1374-79; APAB. Declarations made on 15 Nov. 1920 by General M. Rojas and on 10 June 1921 by General A. Medina regarding Barrios' early military service.

<sup>11</sup> AMT de O, Caja 410, exp. 20.

On 19 March 1913, the *Jefatura* in Puebla City issued instructions to the jefe político of Tetela de Ocampo stating that all municipal presidents should comply with the Ministry of War requirement for the formation of infantry corps in the region.

Thomson & LaFrance, 'Resurgimiento del caciquismo', p. 261.

During the summer of 1913, Lucas showed an uncharacteristic lack of political and military direction. He was caught between his instinct to support the Huertista federal government, and to recognise and support the growing tendency within the Sierra to join the Carrancista rebels. Consequently, when the Barrios brothers joined the Brigada Serrana, they did so, more out of respect for Lucas rather than sympathy with any one revolutionary group.

<sup>12</sup> APAB. See the certified copy dated 8 Nov. 1933 compiled by Colonel Jesus Millan, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> The conflict apparently arose from the political subordination of Cuacuila to Otlatlán during the early twentieth century. This subordination fostered resentment among *cuacuileños* who deemed their treatment by Otlatlán authorities to be unfair.



- 14 APAB. See the certified copy dated 8 Nov. 1933 compiled by Colonel Jesus Millan, p. 3.  
This battle took place in Cuacuila on 20 May 1915. The Márquez forces numbered 1200, and carried with them a field gun and two machine guns. Within three hours the Márquez attacking force had been repelled, leaving 40 dead with a further 60 taken prisoner.
  - 15 Quintero, a mestizo from Cuautempan, had been a long time military and personal adviser to the Lucas family.
  - 16 ADN, C, 2-425, f.399; ADN, C, 2-1145, f.10.
  - 17 APAB. See the certified copy dated 10 Nov. 1933 compiled by Colonel Jesus Millan, p. 14.
  - 18 For a definitive version of Gabriel Barrios' military career, including campaigns, promotions and postings, see: ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 6, ff. 1374-79.
  - 19 Thomson & LaFrance, 'El resurgimiento del caciquismo', pp. 274-75.
  - 20 For details of the military campaigns conducted by forces of the Brigada Serrana, see: ADN, C, XI/111/4-5129; ADN, H, *Historia del 46o. Batallón*.
  - 21 For the terms of the offer see AHUNAM, JBT, 15, 61, 8433-37.
  - 22 ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 1, ff. 67-68.  
Promotion was given 'por méritos contraídos en campaña'.
- APAB. See telegramme from Carranza to Barrios sent on 16 Aug. 1917 which leaves no doubt that his promotion was directly linked to the Otlatlán attack.
- ADN, H, XI/481-5/223, c. 120, ff. 93, 95, 103.  
Further military communiques confirm details of the attack. More importantly, they confirm that Barrios was following the orders of his superior officer, General Pedro Morales, in carrying out the attack and later executing the captured Gaspar Márquez, the sole surviving member of the Márquez family.
- 23 ADN, C, D/111/2-425, f. 384; ADN, C, XI/III/4-5129, ff. 309-347.  
While Abraham appears to have accepted Barrios' rise to power, Miguel Lucas mounted a campaign to support Tranquilino Quintero's military career ambitions, culminating in a letter to Obregón in Jan. 1921. In the letter Miguel Lucas severely criticised the continuing dominance of the 'undeserving ex-Carrancista, Barrios, who had no military training and in every respect was the military inferior of Tranquilino Quintero'.
  - 24 Slade, 'Kinship in the Social Organisation', pp. 155-85.
  - 25 Saenz, *Escuelas federales*, p. 82.
  - 26 See Masferrer Kan, 'Religion y Política en la Sierra Norte de Puebla'; González de la Lama, R., 'Los Papeles de Díaz Manfort: Una revuelta Popular en Misantla (Veracruz), 1885-1886', *Historia Mexicana*, XXXIX: 2, 1989, pp. 475-521.
  - 27 Marentes Bravo, *Relatos Revolucionarios*, p. 8.  
Marentes also cites the rumour that Barrios was the illegitimate son of Juan Francisco Lucas, and thereby inherited some of the powers attributed to Lucas. This rumour still persists, but according to a former servant in the Barrios household in Cuacuila, the story is without foundation and was contrived by Luis Cabrera, who sought to elevate the image of Gabriel Barrios within serrano communities.
  - 28 Interview with Guillermo Mejía Cabrera, 26 Dec. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.
  - 29 Taggart, *Nahua Myth and Social Structure*, pp. 55-66.
  - 30 For details of Juvencio Nochebuena's cacicazgo see Schryer, *Ethnicity and Class*, pp. 127-51.

31 Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt*, pp. 29-40.

32 Ibid., p. 93.

33 Ibid., p. 131.

34 Interview with Señora Posada, 5 Oct. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.

Señora Posada remembers the band playing in Tetela de Ocampo. She describes a band of up to 200 musicians, all Indians from Cuacuilá and neighbouring communities. The musicians were taught, she thought, by professional music teachers. While none of the band members could read or write in Spanish, they mastered perfectly the wide range of instruments the band used, which included a marimba and a grand piano, that were carried up the mountain paths to Cuacuilá. Although the band had a uniform, it was not a military band, all the musicians were civilians.

35 Interview with Humberto Quintero Cruz, (nephew of Tranquilino Quintero), 6 Oct. 1993, Cuautempan.

Señor Quintero gives testimony to the importance of cargos in the Sierra. During the Revolution, the role of *mayordomo* still carried considerable importance in the Sierra. As organiser of the fiesta he assumed the title of 'deputy' and would call upon the support of his kinship ties to make the fiesta as successful as possible. For the duration of the day of the fiesta, the 'deputy' was like a governor, and the villagers, his subjects.

If a wealthy neighbour laid on a fiesta and provided food and drink for the band, his esteem within the community would rise.

36 This account was related in an interview with a survivor of the attack, Señora Cruz Pérez, 2 Jan. 1994, Otlatlán, Zacatlán.

See also, Kuri Camacho, vol. 2, pp. 86-87.

37 Interview with Arnulfo Barrios Aco, 24 Sept. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.

38 Upon the suggestion that Barrios had 'una mujer en cada puerto', one informant reflected for a moment and replied, 'Mejor decir, cada puerta'.

39 That the absence of widespread friction was more due to poor prospects of profitable agriculture rather than any respect for historical land ownership was demonstrated in the municipality of Cuetzalan during the 1860-70s. Coffee cultivation led to the swift encroachment of Indian land and violent clashes between ethnic groups. See: Thomson, 'Agrarian Conflict' pp. 205-58; Valderrama Rouy & Ramírez Suárez, 'Resistencia étnica', pp. 189-206.

40 For examples of such violence, see:

AMT de O, Caja 424.

A report by the military commander of Tetela de Ocampo on 19 June 1914.

AMT de O, Caja 429, 12.

On 20 Sept. 1915, Villistas raided Tenampulco demanding the 'loan' of money and provisions.

ADN, H, 481.5/223, c. 120, f. 73.

On 9 June 1917, citizens of Tetela complain of abuses by General Medina's men.

ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 4, ff. 821-22.

On 9 March 1920, Barrios' troops are accused of committing atrocities in Tetela de Ocampo.

41 Interview with Arnulfo Barrios Aco, 24 Sept. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.

42 AGN, O-C, 209-Q-7.

A letter from Miguel Lucas to President Obregón on 22 Aug. 1921, shows that he was not at all happy that Barrios had assumed control of the region. He claimed that Barrios was using the name and reputation of his father to obtain political and economic benefit. He emphasises that in no way could Barrios claim to be legitimate successor to his father.

- 43 ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 590-91.
- 44 Gruening, E., *Mexico and its Heritage*, (London, 1928).
- 45 Garciadiego Dantan, J., 'La política militar del Presidente Carranza', in *Memoria del Congreso Internacional sobre la Revolución Mexicana*, (Mexico, 1991), pp. 211-236.
- 46 ADN, H, XI/481.5/224, c. 121 (1918), f. 88.  
See letter dated 26 Feb. 1918 from A. Cabrera to Carranza.
- 47 ADN, H, XI/481.5/223, c. 120 (1917), ff. 73-78.  
Letters received by Carranza on 9 and 10 June 1917.
- 48 ADN, H, XI/481.5/23, c. 120 (1917), f. 88.  
Letter dated 30 Aug. 1917 from Medina to the Guerra y Marina.
- 49 ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 1, ff. 236-37 and f. 244; tomo 2, f. 253.
- 50 AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 3.  
Telegramme dated 16 Aug. 1926 from Governor Tirado to President Calles.
- 51 See AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.
- 52 APAB. See copy of declaration dated 15 Nov. 1920 made by General M. Rojas, which states that Barrios had publicly recognised the Plan de Agua Prieta on 14 May 1920. (See also ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 6, ff. 1274, 1374-79).
- 53 ADN, C, 2-1145, f. 233.  
This report was made by General Brigadier Arturo Viqueras on 3 June 1920 and sent to General Brigadier Ricardo Reyes Márquez of the *Jefatura de Operaciones Militares*, Puebla.
- 54 Knight, 'Peasants and caudillos', p. 27.
- 55 Amongst the most virulent, published accusation of Barrios' denial of Carranza is that of Castillo, P. del, *Puebla y Tlaxcala en los días de la Revolución*, (Mexico, 1953).
- 56 Carranza, J., *La verdad sobre la muerte de Carranza*, (Texas, 1920).
- Luis Cabrera agrees with Julia Carranza's verdict on the role Barrios played in the death of her father. See: Blas Urrea, *La herencia de Carranza*, (Mexico, 1982), pp. 114-19.
- 57 *El Universal*, Mexico D.F., 20 May 1920, p. 9, reports the decision of Magistrate González that, as a result of the manifesto declared by Carranza on 6 May 1920, he could no longer enjoy the presidential powers afforded under the Constitution.
- 58 Interview with Arnulfo Barrios Aco, 24 Sept. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.  
Members of the Barrios family insist that Barrios received two telegrammes from Obregón ordering him to capture and kill Carranza should he pass through the Sierra. Unfortunately, as yet, the documentary evidence to substantiate the claim remains elusive.
- 59 For details of the death of Bardomiano Barrios Cabrera, see: AGN, O-C, 408-P-20; ADN, C, X/III 2/15-1879, f. 92 and f. 100.
- 60 ADN, C, XI/III/2-754, f. 14.

61 AMT de O, Caja 42.

See telegramme dated 1 Feb. 1922 from Joaquín Palomino to Barrios.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1922. Telegrammes received/sent in 1922.

See: communique dated 25 April 1922 from General A. Elizondo, *Jefatura* in Puebla to Barrios; communique dated 24 Aug. 1922 from Barrios to the *Jefatura*, Puebla; communique dated 25 Aug. 1922 from Barrios to *Jefatura*, Puebla.

FAC y T., Exp. 93, Inv. 543. See memo dated 30 May 1922 from Barrios to Calles.

62 *El Monitor*, 27 Jan. 1922, no. 1278, p. 1.

For details of Medina raids and Barrios' steps to counter his actions:

AML, Seguridad Pública, 4. (13 Mar. 1922); BLC.RHAM. Caja 1922. Messages sent/received in April 1922.

63 AML, Seguridad Pública, 1922, 4 and 6.

64 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1922. Telegrammes sent January 1922.

As early as January 1922, Barrios was advising the *Jefatura* in Puebla of rebel activities being conducted in Villa Juárez by Hernández and others.

65 For details of Almazán's campaign against Hernández, see AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

For correspondence between Calles and Hernández, see FAC y T., Gav. 41, Hernández, Lindoro (Gral.) Exp. 91, Leg. 1/2, Inv. 2727.

66 Dulles, J.W.F., *Yesterday in Mexico*, (Austin, 1961), p. 221.

67 AGN, O-C, 241-W-L-25.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1924. Telegrammes received March-April 1924.

On 22 Mar. 1924, Major Demetrio Barrios, in Xochiapulco, confirmed that Salvador Vega Bernal had surrendered all the arms and ammunition under his control to the Barrios army.

68 These orders, however, were quickly revoked, reflecting the speed at which the rebellion was crushed.

69 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1927. Telegrammes for October 1927.

70 Several informants in the Sierra confirm that this conversation took place. Many believe Gabriel Barrios kept faith with Lucas' advice, including his son, Arnulfo Barrios Aco, and interestingly, Señor Hernández, a former soldier in the Márquez army. (Interviewed on 3 Jan. 1994, Zacatlán.)

71 See ADN, C, 2-1145, f. 236-37.

72 Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, p. 319.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 320.

74 Garciadiego, 'La política militar...', pp. 226-31.

75 *Ibid.* p. 234.

76 Tobler, H.W., 'Peasants and the Shaping of the Revolutionary State, 1910-1940s' in Katz, F. (ed), *Riot, Rebellion and Homicide*, (Princeton, 1988), pp. 487-518.

Tobler relates the impressions of one revolutionary: 'Obregón...accepts all who come: Felixistas, clericals..., Villistas who have not yet surrendered, Zapatistas, everyone gets in and then it is no longer possible to know who was a revolutionary and who an enemy of the revolution.' p. 493.

77 Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, p. 323.

78 Lozoya, J.A., *El Ejército Mexicano*, (Mexico, 1970), pp. 53-57.

<sup>79</sup> *El Monitor*, 15 Feb. 1921, no. 2, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Gómez, A R. (Gral.), *El Centinela*, (Mexico, 1924).

<sup>81</sup> Interview with José María Barrios, 23 Oct. 1993, Tonalapa, Tetela de Ocampo. Upon learning that the over-enthusiastic victory celebrations of a detachment of his troops had almost resulted in a subsequent defeat in battle, Barrios imposed a total alcohol ban on his soldiers and officers. Years later, Barrios was to create many enemies for the drastic measures he imposed on serrano communities by restricting the production and consumption of *aguardiente* and other forms of alcohol.

<sup>82</sup> Marentes Bravo, *Relatos Revolucionarios*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>83</sup> AGN, O-C, 816-P-45, p. 12.

<sup>84</sup> AMZn, Caja 3, 31, Gobernación.

On 20 April 1920 a military judge asked the municipal president of Zacatlán to ensure that Señora Pérez should travel to Puebla to substantiate charges made against Barrios.

ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 5, ff. 1017-93.

On 7 Aug. 1920 a military investigation in Puebla considered accusations made by citizens in Huauchinango that Barrios was waging a caste war. Only a fraction of the signatories was prepared to ratify charges.

ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 5, ff. 1140-60.

On 23 March 1921 a military investigation made strenuous efforts to get a married couple from the municipality of Zacapoaxtla to ratify charges against Barrios. The man, Señor Vázquez, made several excuses including lack of money and time to make the trip, and later that he felt unwell. His wife eventually made a legal statement saying that the original claims were completely untrue.

<sup>85</sup> ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 4, f. 842.

<sup>86</sup> AMZn, Caja 2, 43, Justicia.

See correspondence dated 21 Oct. 1920 which confirms that, after searching the *padrones de vecinos*, Berriozábal could not be found on any of the lists relating to the municipality of Zacatlán.

<sup>87</sup> ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 5, ff. 1017-93.

In this document, his surname is spelt Berriozábal, not Barriozábal. However, this is unlikely to have seriously hampered the search for his whereabouts.

<sup>88</sup> ADN, H, Caja 120, ff. 73-78.

In a letter dated 10 June 1917 from General A. Medina to Carranza, Medina alleges that commanders of the Brigada Serrana were guilty of falsifying troop numbers.

ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 4, ff. 807-12.

See letters dated 20 Nov. 1917 and 20 Jan. 1918 sent from the soldiers to the *Jefatura* in Puebla. (See also ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 1, f. 133.)

<sup>89</sup> ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 4, f. 828.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with José María Barrios, 23 Oct. 1993, Tonalapa, Tetela de Ocampo.

<sup>91</sup> ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 1, ff. 133-35.

<sup>92</sup> ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 1, ff. 14-26.

<sup>93</sup> AGN, O-C, 241-W-L-25.

<sup>94</sup> ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 1, f. 133, and f. 139, and tomo 4, ff. 807-12.

<sup>95</sup> AMC, Caja 140a, Presidencia, exp. 2, 33.

<sup>96</sup> ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 1, f. 150, ff. 155-57; tomo 2, f. 260; tomo 4, ff. 857-59, and f. 876.

<sup>97</sup> AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

<sup>98</sup> *La Opinión*, 1 April 1930, no. 2157, p. 4; *La Opinión*, 28 May 1930, no. 2213, p. 1.

### 3. Public Security and Political Control: Barrios' local cacique network

One of the major challenges facing the Sonorenses was to repair the material and social damage caused by years of civil war. Without social and political stability efforts at economic reconstruction were unlikely to have effect. By the end of the 1920s, Calles had achieved a large degree of central control, but when Obregón took office in 1920, this must have seemed a distant prospect. Regional caudillos posed a threat to federal government authority, while agrarian and labour groups waited impatiently for reform. Meanwhile, lack of international confidence in the Mexican economy overshadowed prospects for regeneration. At a local level, the violence of the civil war had brushed aside the vestiges of Porfirian authority: the *jefes políticos* and *rurales*. In an atmosphere of demoralisation, grief and cynicism, it would take much to convince Mexicans that local figures of authority deserved the respect that they had once enjoyed.

This chapter investigates the degree to which the Sierra de Puebla was affected by the more general breakdown in law and order. By investigating the nature of lawlessness that accompanied and followed the Revolution, it will be easier to identify the sectors of society that participated in illegal actions, their motives, and the consequences of civil disobedience for serrano society as a whole. The chapter will examine the methods Barrios employed to transform the Sierra from its previous turmoil into a region that once again enjoyed a semblance of civilian normality. Such a change was not achieved solely through the use of force, and attention will be given to the ways in which public officials reasserted their authority.

Finally, an analysis will be made of how the cacicazgo co-ordinated the various components of local authority and created an atmosphere within which regional reconstruction, rather than banditry, was adopted as the preferred means of surviving the dour years that followed the Revolution. While the finer aspects of such development are dealt with in chapter five, the use of *faenas*, a system of voluntary labour organised for community benefits, is vital to this discussion. This chapter examines how the *faena* system was modified and controlled by the Barrios brothers. Their tactics in respect to *faenas* had social and political implications which determined the long-term nature of the cacicazgo.

### ***Banditry and civil disorder in the Sierra***

Although revolutionary violence provided the Barrios family with the opportunity to seize regional control, it would be wrong to imagine that the Sierra spent the years of the Revolution in a state of constant warfare. Military engagement in the Sierra was sporadic rather than a sustained phenomenon that forced a total cessation of civilian life, and not all serrano communities became directly involved in the military struggle.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, serrano society often displayed signs of strain. Raids by revolutionary forces against defenceless communities were aggravated by the many bandit groups that freely roamed this mountainous region. Low public morale was manifest in the increased levels of petty crime, default on tax and education contributions, and the refusal to maintain the region's thoroughfares, so vital for the survival of social and economic life.<sup>2</sup>

Banditry was the most difficult obstacle impeding the Sierra's transition from war to peace. The same topographical features that made the area so



difficult for external revolutionary forces to control, also allowed bandits to operate with little fear of retribution. Isolated mountain communities linked by narrow, dirt tracks that meandered the steep, forested hillsides provided ideal conditions for ambush. While banditry had always been a factor of rural life in the Sierra, it greatly increased during the Revolution. In addition, the Revolution made it more difficult to establish the identity and motives of the assailants, with many revolutionary factions resorting to banditry to sustain their campaign. Those who charged Gabriel Barrios with the task of re-establishing law and order were more interested in results rather than underlying motives and, in fulfilling the role expected of him, Barrios employed the universal remedy of repression.

It is clear that bandits made the most of the confusion caused by the Revolution. As a Carrancista report revealed in 1914, it was common for groups of bandits to raid Sierra towns claiming to be revolutionaries although they were not recognised by any military chief.<sup>3</sup> Even if such reports were accurate, the motives for banditry remain elusive. The very nature of the crime makes it difficult to ascertain whether bandits acted through greed, or whether they were forced to crime for other reasons: a lack of alternative means of subsistence; revenge; factional or inter-communal tension; a more ideological desire to redistribute the region's wealth away from the rich towards the community as a whole.

The evidence provided by alleged victims of banditry is also suspect. In 1913 the people of Tonalapa, Tetela, wrote to the state governor complaining of the havoc wreaked upon them by all sides in the conflict. After complying with the demands of their attackers, the villagers still felt too insecure to stray beyond their village for fear of attack by federal forces who might regard them as rebel sympathisers. The underlying purpose of their letter, however, was to argue

that economic disruption had made it impossible for them to satisfy their tax obligations and they appealed to the governor to waive their debt.<sup>4</sup> Did revolutionary violence really disrupt economic life in Tonalapa to the extent claimed, or was such disruption exaggerated in order to avoid tax payment? Where the victims were able to identify their attackers, could the investigating authorities rely on such accounts or might the plaintiffs have been influenced by the desire to settle old scores with local rivals?

As will be discussed in chapter six, local interpretations of bandit activity in the Zacapoaxtla district were greatly influenced by factional rivalries. This suggests that municipal reports are unreliable as an indication of the true nature and motives of a particular group's activities. The question of distinguishing true intentions from documentary evidence is reflected in the debate about social banditry.<sup>5</sup> Evidence to support a conclusion that banditry in the Sierra responded to social considerations is hard to find. Until more detailed research has been conducted into the subject, reports of such crimes must be treated with caution. The Barrios family, in any case, did not reflect upon the subtle distinctions of the motives for banditry. Gabriel Barrios identified this form of violent crime as particularly undesirable and employed ruthless tactics to eradicate it.<sup>6</sup>

Although easily identifiable within the municipal archives, more limited forms of crime and civil disobedience remain equally difficult to classify by motive. Acts of murder, violence and robbery that apparently displayed personal or domestic characteristics may have been related to wider tensions between families, factions or communities. What, for example, did the non-payment of education contributions demonstrate? Did it indicate ethnic or cultural resistance to external attempts to 'civilise' the Indian? Was it a sign of an inability to pay caused by economic disruption, an attempt to take personal

advantage of the inadequacy of local authority to enforce payment, or a variable mix of these and other factors?

In a similar way, Gabriel Barrios' reimposition of *faenas* during the 1920s provoked a mixture of active and passive resistance. Did such opposition reflect a fundamental belief that *faenas* breached a citizen's protection under the Constitution? Did it mask an attempt by political opponents to undermine the cacique's designs on the region? Or did it demonstrate a reticence on the part of campesinos to accept a reintroduction of the onerous duties that revolutionary disorder had suspended? The available evidence defies simple analysis according to race or social background. Resistance to local authority was not limited to one district of the Sierra but was found throughout the entire region, while the localised nature of such resistance discounts any broader concerted display of civil disobedience.

Whatever the reasons for disorder in a given serrano community, the transformation from more centralised authority to localised arbitrary power was what allowed these factors to develop. While most Mexicans desired a cessation to the violence and uncertainty of civil war, the militarisation of politics was characterised by a casual disregard for local civil authority by those holding greater coercive force. It would be a difficult task to convince the serranos that the same local authorities now represented the best chance of reviving serrano fortunes. Much as the serranos might have desired it otherwise, the promise of stability and security lay not in the law courts but where it had rested during the previous years; with those who retained the greatest force. Obregón's approval of Barrios in 1920 meant that the future stability of many serranos rested upon Barrios' ability to fulfil his role as the Sierra's policeman.

*Jefes de armas and cuerpos voluntarios*

Crime has always gone unpunished in Mexico. It follows that there is no justice. How often does one hear of the death penalty inflicted in Mexico? Next to never. Punishment is carried out not through the law courts [but] through violence. It was always so. Díaz merely continued the previous condition. It has been so all through the Revolution. It is so to-day.<sup>7</sup>

In many regions of the Republic, methods of restoring civil obedience were under discussion long before the violence had subsided. During the Carranza administration, the failure of various state governments to obtain approval for the creation of regional security forces was a symptom of the prevailing mistrust. When Puebla's governor, Alfonso Cabrera, applied for approval to set up such a network he was at pains to stress the absolute need for such forces while stressing the limited authority that each group would be given. Cabrera's request also provides evidence of the acute situation regarding law enforcement in the state capital: he reminded Carranza of the president's promise to send pistols for the police force in Puebla so that they could more effectively combat the 'plague of rats arriving from Mexico'.<sup>8</sup>

A state government circular issued to the municipal authorities less than a month later suggests that approval was granted for the formation of *cuerpos regionales* with the aim of 'protecting life and property against law-breakers and those called Zapatistas'. The size of the group was to be decided locally; a list drawn up of all members, with a nominated member to be custodian of all weapons. Reports were to be made every five days and, most importantly, the groups were to be under the sole authority of the state executive: under no circumstances should they be subject to the authority of the Ministry of War.<sup>9</sup> That Carranza allowed Cabrera to establish such groups reflects the trust that the Cabrera family enjoyed with the First Chief, underlined by Luis Cabrera's influential position within the president's cabinet.

The lack of evidence of widespread recruitment of *cuerpos regionales* in the Sierra de Puebla suggests that they never represented an effective response to the prevailing lawlessness. It should not be concluded, however, that local concern for regional stability had not been voiced. Indeed, the debate began in 1913 when Demetrio Santa Fe sought to tackle the failings of local civil authority.<sup>10</sup> His solution included a reappraisal of the role previously played by *jefes políticos* which, during the Porfiriato had been orchestrated in Puebla by the authoritarian governor, Mucio P. Martínez.<sup>11</sup> Santa Fe suggested that a body of respected citizens within each community should be made responsible for safeguarding the rights of their neighbours. Any abuse of power by democratically elected representatives was to be exposed and corrected while disruptive, anti-social, or immoral behaviour should be eradicated. He called for a strict separation between local politics and the duties of *jefes políticos* who, he suggested, should act as official overseers and supporters of the local committees' objectives. The tone of the '*programa*' implied that citizens had lost faith in local government and that, rather than safeguarding the constitutional rights of the public, local officials were suspected of using their positions for self-enrichment. This loss of public faith was reflected in the decline in tax contributions, especially towards education.<sup>12</sup>

In July 1917 Santa Fe still shared the disillusionment of his fellow serranos regarding the ravages of revolutionary turmoil. In a letter to Abraham Lucas, he referred to widespread corruption in the military and how formerly prosperous communities were being ravaged by banditry. In these circumstances, he suggested, people had become demoralised, their efforts to combat banditry having detracted from their agricultural duties to such an extent that production was less than half the normal amount.<sup>13</sup> By September 1917 Santa Fe was calling for a co-ordinated network of civil guards and other law enforcement groups.<sup>14</sup> His proposals bore many of the characteristics later

suggested by Governor Cabrera regarding regional security forces. These would comprise groups of up to twenty-five locally based armed men under the command of one leader. In turn, the groups would be subject to the direct authority of the state executive's local representatives, the municipal presidents.<sup>15</sup> Groups were to operate in strictly within the community with no co-ordinated actions undertaken unless specifically permitted in order to combat serious threats by bandits and other armed groups. Such units would also provide prison guards and maintain a register of all those carrying arms, restrictions being imposed on known drunks and unsociable elements in the community. Santa Fe also suggested that the personnel of these groups should be changed periodically to enable all respectable members of a community to gain experience of military service and the responsible handling of weapons.

Like the state governor's later proposals, Santa Fe's suggestions for local security appear not to have materialised. In 1918, for example, only twice do Zacapoxtla's local authority documents refer to the existence of *jefes de armas*: in February, state authorities ordered the *jefe de armas* to be charged for abuses of his position; and in November a citizen from Zacapoxtla complained that he had been wrongfully imprisoned by Barrios troops who, he claimed, were encroaching upon the jurisdiction of the *jefe de armas* of Zacapoxtla.<sup>16</sup> These incidents suggest that in Zacapoxtla, at least, little had changed since 1914 when Santa Fe concluded that local authorities lacked discipline and were incapable of meeting their responsibilities. The incidents also provide evidence of a growing trend in the Sierra: increasing numbers of Barrios troops were assuming a policing role to compensate for the failure of local judges and officials to respond adequately to the demands placed upon them.<sup>17</sup>

Obregón's confirmation of Barrios' military position in the Sierra in 1920 coincided with the widening of the cacique's civilian peace-keeping duties.

During the Revolution, although military manoeuvres had frequently taken place in the *tierra caliente*, Barrios' co-operation in questions of non-military security had usually been limited to the districts of Tetela and Zacatlán. During the 1920s, however, military operations and development programmes increased the possibility of troop deployment to more diverse regions of the Sierra and the *tierra caliente*.<sup>18</sup> The fine line between rebellion and banditry increasingly demanded that Barrios make the restoration of public security his prime objective.<sup>19</sup>

Barrios did not meet these additional responsibilities by recruiting extra troops. Given the restraints on military finances this was not a viable option and, as outlined in the previous chapter, the Barrios family had its own reasons for restricting the size of its force. The solution was a hybrid of the various schemes that had been previously used or proposed. Garrisons of the 46th Battalion were located in various regions of the Sierra and the *tierra caliente*, each supervising a network of armed security forces that were located within the communities lying in their military zone. These groups were under the command of a *jefe de armas* who was responsible for maintaining stability within his locality and for controlling the actions of the *cuervo voluntario* under his supervision.

Given the vague nature of military recruitment outlined in the previous chapter, it is probable that many members of *cuervos voluntarios* were unaware of their military status. Many of Barrios' regular forces were, it seems, local armed groups under the control of *jefes de armas*. The demeanour of these groups suggests that they regarded themselves as quasi-military units. *Jefes de armas* referred to their own armed men as 'soldiers' and 'troops', while they addressed Gabriel Barrios as '*mi general*'. Certainly, the ill-defined nature of their status caused several *jefes* to clarify their position. In one account, the *jefe*

*de armas* of Jilotzingo, (Zacatlán) Felix Luna, asked Bardomiano Barrios to intervene in a dispute in which the soldiers accused Luna of withholding wages.<sup>20</sup> On another occasion Pedro Becerril, *jefe de armas* in Chilocoyo, (Zacatlán) wished to know if his soldiers were entitled to wages, especially in relation to three days service they had given in a neighbouring community. Bardomiano Barrios replied that he was unable to pay the men as funds were only available to pay soldiers in regular service. The duties of Becerril and officials in other communities, Barrios continued, did not meet this requirement, but should be viewed more as community initiatives that enabled serranos to defend and preserve the order of their settlements. Referring to the service given by Becerril's group to the community of Caxhuacan, (Zacatlán) Bardomiano Barrios advised Becerril that the municipal president had been instructed to pay Becerril and his troops for services rendered. Had this not yet occurred, Barrios promised to visit the area to rectify the matter.<sup>21</sup>

Despite Bardomiano Barrios' assertion that these groups were voluntary and concerned only with local law enforcement, they should more correctly be viewed as auxiliaries to the regular troops of the 46th. Battalion. The weapons that Becerril possessed had been supplied by the Ministry of War, and formed just one example of federal government sponsorship of the *cuerpos voluntarios*. In January 1924 General Juan A. Almazán requested that the Ministry of War increase the consignment of rifles to be sent to Barrios from 300 to 400.<sup>22</sup> The extra weapons were to equip a badly needed voluntary force under the command of José Huidobro. Less than a month later, Barrios arranged for the consignment of 400 rifles to be collected from the Ministry of War.<sup>23</sup> Again, during the Serrano rebellion, the Ministry of War authorised Barrios to recruit 250 men as 'auxiliaries' to maintain military presence in the Sierra in the event of the redeployment of regular troops, confirming that the wages of these extra troops would be paid from federal funds.<sup>24</sup> It seems reasonable to conclude that



the auxiliaries recruited were none other than the voluntary armed groups that Barrios had already formed within the region. Recruitment would be relatively swift and the auxiliaries would already be aware of the command structure and methods of communicating with superior officers. In addition, their knowledge of the local terrain would give them a considerable advantage over their enemies.

One vital difference between the schemes suggested by Governor Cabrera and Santa Fe and the network that Barrios established was that the *jefes de armas* were directly responsible to the Barrios family rather than to the state executive. As auxiliaries whose recruitment depended exclusively upon his influence, these groups never became formally tied to federal or state authority. This gave Barrios a vital margin of independence from his superiors. Such freedom never extended to that enjoyed by Saturnino Cedillo who, during his time as governor of San Luis Potosí, built up his military potential by ransacking the state government coffers.<sup>25</sup> The periodic provision of arms by the Ministry of War ensured that the Barrios family were never so independent that they could ignore the need to maintain good relations with their military and political superiors. Nevertheless, the fact that the Ministry of War never enjoyed direct links with the Sierra voluntary forces meant that, while the threat of rebellion justified the need for such forces, Barrios remained an essential intermediary in the eyes of the federal government. Moreover, given the political instability of the state capital during the 1920s, the federal government may well have preferred the Sierra to be controlled by a semi-autonomous 'friendly' military force rather than a militia controlled by a state government that could not always be trusted.<sup>26</sup>

*Jefes de armas: the scope and nature of the security network*

During the 1920s the Barrios cacicazgo expanded beyond its origins in the districts of Zacatlán and Tetela de Ocampo, engulfed the Sierra and eventually stretched from the *altiplano* town of Perote to the *tierra caliente* district of Papantla; an area that included territory lying in no less than four states. The extent and topography of the land incorporated within the cacicazgo made it vital that the Barrios family establish effective communications with its many local representatives. The answer lay in the telephone.

As a direct result of Gabriel Barrios' initiative to establish a comprehensive network of telephones throughout the region under his control, the Barrios family could swiftly mobilise several thousand armed campesinos to counter any emergency that might arise. This ability to draw swiftly upon such a reserve of troops was Barrios' main value to the federal government. Yet the use of *jefes de armas* as local commanders in time of rebellion was an unusual occurrence, even in the turbulent political environment of the 1920s. Mostly, the *cuerpos voluntarios* were assigned peace-keeping roles within their neighbourhoods. The telephone network acted as an efficient means of conveying information to the cacicazgo's central base in Cuacuilá regarding local disturbances and for the Barrios family to act swiftly in taking appropriate remedial action.

The telephone network gives a good indication of the extent of the *jefe de armas* network as apparatus was installed in all communities that hosted local *cuerpos voluntarios*. In an undated report presented to President Calles by the Ministry of War, the telephone network was described as comprising over 2000 km of cables with a total of 500 offices; there was a telephone in almost every community in the sector.<sup>27</sup> The entire Sierra was well represented, with offices

throughout the municipalities of Zacatlán, Alatriste, Tetela, Huauchinango, and Pahuatlán in the north-west, and Zacapoaxtla, San Juan de los Llanos and Tlatlauquitepec in the south-east. Several offices were also located in the districts of Tulancingo in Hidalgo, Papantla in Veracruz, and Tlaxco and Huamantla in Tlaxcala. The majority of the locations beyond the Sierra were in communities that were a focus of attention during the 1920s, either as strategic positions in the fight against Delahuertistas, or due to them being situated along the route of major road construction projects. In both circumstances the *cuerpos voluntarios* were crucial to the success of the enterprise. Even with a conservative estimate that only half of the telephone offices indicated the presence of *cuerpos voluntarios*, there existed at least three thousand armed men deployed across five states, each group in frequent and immediate contact with the Barrios brothers. The network of *jefes de armas*, therefore, represented a potentially formidable force.<sup>28</sup>

Barrios was careful to limit the authority of his various *jefes de armas*. The arms and ammunition issued from the headquarters in Zacatlán were distributed sparingly and with considerable thought. A section of Becerril's letter related to his need for an increase in the five rifles and 80 bullets that had been issued to him the previous year. Bardomiano Barrios refused the request claiming that there were no extra arms available, and as Becerril's region was stable there was little need to seek additional ammunition. This may have reflected a genuine shortage yet when the need arose, Barrios had little problem in obtaining further weapons from the Ministry of War. More likely, it was a cautionary measure; by restricting arms and only providing more in the case of emergency, *jefes de armas* were limited to responding to local disturbances. The danger of any group mounting a challenge would have been stunted by its lack of ammunition and arms.<sup>29</sup>

Such precautions account only in part for the loyalty of *cuerpos voluntarios* to the cacicazgo. While it would be wrong to suggest that Barrios did not experience disciplinary problems with his *jefes de armas*, there is no example of a *jefe* using his privileged position to mount a challenge against the Barrios family's control. In order to understand why Barrios was able to instil such loyalty over such an extensive area, it is necessary to investigate the choice of *jefes* and the nature of the control that the Barrios family held over them.

The most idealised image of the *jefe de armas* is painted by one of Barrios' sons. In an interview, José María Barrios described a typical *jefe* as a man whose personal qualities identified him as a natural leader within a community. As *jefes* were required to receive and understand written instructions and keep Barrios informed of all events, the *jefe* would be bilingual and have a basic literacy. He would be impartial in his dealings and have no political or commercial interests that might compromise his position of authority.<sup>30</sup>

Even allowing for an element of bias, the above description might most accurately be viewed as an aggregate of the characteristics of *jefes* as a whole, rather than qualities possessed by a single individual. The area under Barrios' control was too large and too diverse for any generalisation regarding the qualities of the *jefes de armas*. The description given by Barrios' son raises questions relating to the selection of legitimate community leaders. How important was the traditional system of village office appointments? What part did bilingualism and literacy play? How did commercial and factional rivalries impinge upon the choice of leaders? Indeed, does José María Barrios' positive image of the *jefe de armas* merely obscure a reality of the widespread imposition of illegitimate thugs who menaced and abused villagers into submission?

A good starting point to test Jose María Barrios' description is to analyse two extremes. Of all *jefes de armas*, the Galindo Salazar family of Amixtlán enjoyed Gabriel and Demetrio Barrios' closest confidence. Enrique Galindo was *jefe de armas* of Tepango, Zacatlán, in 1924,<sup>31</sup> while his brother Alfredo Galindo became *jefe* of Amixtlán in 1925.<sup>32</sup> After the 46th. Battalion's departure from the Sierra, Alfredo Galindo, compadre of Demetrio Barrios, was given power of attorney to administer legal affairs in Demetrio's absence.<sup>33</sup> With another brother, Ramón Galindo, representing the Barrios family in the federal congress as deputy for Teziutlán, it is evident that a considerable bond of trust joined the two families.<sup>34</sup>

The memories of Ramón Galindo's daughter provide a fascinating picture of the social background of these most trusted *jefes de armas*. The Galindo family already enjoyed considerable wealth by the nineteenth century with Ramón Galindo Abarca, the father of the brothers, owning property covering 2,000 hectares in addition to many houses and commercial properties in Amixtlán. The family's agricultural interests included coffee and vanilla production and the rearing of cattle. Typical of their wealthy mestizo class, the men of the family wore the finest French cashmere suits and rode thorough-bred horses. The Galindo children each had their own nanny and a school was built in Amixtlán which provided them with 'the best education available in Mexico'. Whenever the ladies of the family travelled from Amixtlán to Zacatlán, they always took care to ride side-saddle through the villages along the road in order to maintain the image of their lofty social position.<sup>35</sup>

How does this description of the Galindo family match the model of the *jefe de armas* as perceived by José María Barrios? In one respect, José María Barrios' description applies. If Barrios was in search of individuals who commanded respect within the community, then the Galindo family certainly

fulfilled the requirement. Yet the Galindo could never be viewed as disinterested representatives of law and order: the Galindo family controlled political, judicial, commercial and social life within the region and, moreover, such domination was reinforced by close personal ties with the Barrios family. The Galindo family may be an extreme but other examples, such as the Flores family of Cuetzalan, the Lechuga of Huauchinango, the Macip of Zacapoaxtla, suggest that in certain important locations, Barrios was inclined to adopt a pragmatic approach towards his selection of *jefes de armas*. All four examples represented, to greater or lesser degrees, dominant factions within non-Indian communities. Their relative strength could not merely be brushed aside in preference for other, non-aligned *jefes de armas*. To ignore their local domination would have been to risk increasing the frictions and factional violence that the appointment of *jefes de armas* sought to impede.

Therefore, when José María Barrios refers to his father's tendency to seek out natural leaders, this definition should be extended to cover leadership through factional domination. Barrios did not hesitate to use existing factionalism to identify and enlist a sector of a community towards the greater cause.<sup>36</sup> For a dominant faction, the support and patronage expected to flow from an allegiance to the cacique would have acted as a strong incentive. For the Galindo, the incentive was sufficiently strong to overcome any ethnic reservations that non-Indian obedience to an Indian cacique might normally have provoked.<sup>37</sup>

If the social and political realities of cabeceras required that *jefes de armas* be non-Indians, the position in many Indian communities was more likely to be occupied by an Indian. It is worth recalling José María Barrios' ideal for the *jefe*: natural leadership; no commercial or political interests; a native of the community in which he lived. When compared with the findings of

anthropological studies, an interesting point emerges. In their comparative study of the Totonac communities of Tajín and Eloxochitlán, Viqueira and Palerm suggest that the differing development of each community's relationships with the non-Indian world beyond affected social norms.<sup>38</sup> In Eloxochitlán, prestige was acquired through a cargo system designed to limit wealth: political leadership was explicitly separated from commercial prosperity derived from contact with the outside world. In the more acculturated Tajín, commercial ties with the non-Indian world were not excluded, although in order to be accepted as a legitimate community leader a person would be expected to use his consequential wealth to sponsor cargos. Bulcher's study of the Nahuatl community of Atempan, near Teziutlán, also identifies a hierarchical structure which places less emphasis upon wealth and more upon the moral ascendancy afforded by cargo sponsorship.<sup>39</sup> Although located in different regions and possessing distinct ethnic traditions, both Tajín and Atempan showed the ability to adapt hierarchical systems to external pressures. As will be developed in chapter six, such flexibility within traditional societies allowed the Barrios family sufficient room to manoeuvre their chosen *jefe* into position. In communities striving to limit external influences and the economic disparities that might develop, Barrios would have sought compromise with those leaders of a community identified by the internal hierarchical system. In these cases, such leaders would have little or no contact with external commercial interests and might more easily suit José María Barrios' ideal of impartial *jefes de armas*. In a community such as Tajín, however, where wealth and commercial relationships with external influences contributed to political prestige, appointment as one of Barrios' *jefe de armas* would provide an important option by which a man's outside connections could reinforce his social standing within a community.

José María Barrios' suggestion that *jefes de armas* needed to be literate raises the more general question regarding the place of a cultural intermediary within serrano rural communities. It must be stated, however, that from the available material, only a minority of *jefes de armas* ever sent written reports to Barrios. Of these, the standard of the written word varied from the highest quality of Enrique Galindo to reports showing only a basic understanding of the Spanish language. The majority of the reports were either conveyed verbally to nearby garrisons and then related to headquarters in Zacatlán, or telephoned directly to Cuacuila. Such messages could, of course, be conveyed in *nahuatl*. Leaders of Indian communities were not, therefore, excluded from the Barrios cacicazgo. However, low literacy in serrano communities does provide an additional motive for Barrios' initiatives to develop a telephone network and rapidly to expand the number of rural schools.

Between the two extremes of non-Indian wealthy men of influence, such as the Galindo, and the traditional leaders of Indian communities, there was a large middle territory occupied by *jefes de armas* recruited for convenience or through more haphazard procedures. An example of such recruitment is revealed in correspondence between Captain Leandro Amaro, commander of the garrison in Huauchinango, and Demetrio Barrios in February 1925. Amaro reported that several cases had recently occurred where individuals had handed over their weapons and had sought permission to become leaders of their community's voluntary forces to combat local banditry and lawlessness. It appears that some were already fulfilling this role, while at least one of the volunteers had previously been a colonel in the forces of General Lindoro Hernández. Amaro also made reference to routine security reports sent by *jefes de armas* and drew particular attention to reports that bandits in the Tlaxcalantongo area were robbing and hanging innocent people. The municipal president of Tlaxcalantongo had asked Amaro either to send a detachment of



troops to combat the bandits, or to allow the local authorities to conduct their own armed defence. In his reply, Demetrio Barrios ordered Amaro to ensure that the volunteers restricted their men's actions to those necessary to maintain law and order in their localities and to keep Amaro informed of bandit activities in order to facilitate a co-ordinated response. Barrios also authorised Tlaxcalantongo residents of 'reputable character' to arm themselves with the sole objective of protecting their community.<sup>40</sup>

Such recruitment suggests that the fine criteria described by José María Barrios more often gave way to expediency. The need to combat banditry and the shortage of police to accomplish the task, forced the Barrios family to use less meticulous methods of recruitment. The above example, while confirming that banditry was still a major concern in 1925, also indicates that the Barrios family was recognised by local community leaders as the entity from which all legitimacy flowed. In surrendering their arms and placing themselves at Barrios' disposal, these local figures were effectively pledging their loyalty to, and obtaining a measure of protection from, the cacique. The cautionary remarks of Demetrio Barrios regarding the choice of men, their future conduct and their limited terms of reference reflect the more general requirement that the Barrios family made upon their *jefes de armas*.

The job of appointing and monitoring the system of *jefes* fell to Bardomiano Barrios and, after his death, to his brother Demetrio. Upon appointment each *jefe* received a verbal or written description of his duties. Those sent to Ricardo M. Ramírez of Tetzitzilica, Pue. and Arnulfo Sánchez of el Rancho de la Palma, Tlaxco, Tlax. on 21 January 1921 are typical:

On behalf of General Gabriel Barrios and in agreement with the headquarters, you have been chosen to become *jefe de los voluntarios* of your locality on the understanding that you always conduct yourself in an honourable manner and that you afford full guarantees to all law-abiding men so that they may dedicate themselves to lawful business. You are also expected to maintain good public order.<sup>41</sup>

Other appointments in 1923 carried a reminder that the new *jefes* should set a good example and, in one case, permission was given to disarm the population to preserve the good order and morality of the community.<sup>42</sup> Most evidence confirms that the Barrios family appointed *jefes* to fulfil a role which was entirely connected with public security, the control of arms and the suppression of bandits. They were not given licence to act in place, or in contempt of existing local civil authority.<sup>43</sup>

On several occasions, orders were issued from the cacicazgo's headquarters in response to complaints against *jefes de armas*. Their tone is consistent with the line adopted upon appointment:

[...] It has been brought to my attention that some of the soldiers under your command are committing abuses against people and property and have regularly been seen drunk. As you appear to tolerate such abuses, I have a duty to warn you of the serious consequences should such a state of affairs be allowed to continue. I am strongly against such behaviour and this letter should be considered as the only warning that you will receive. Such abuses must be stopped completely as they bring discredit not only upon commanders but also the Government. Acknowledge receipt of this letter and take steps to comply with the duties expected of you.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the Barrios family's attempts to restrict the actions of the *jefes de armas*, there would always be some who exceeded their powers. Whether complaints against *jefes de armas* represented a more generalised grievance concerning the arbitrary imposition of armed guards within a community or were simply a reaction to a particular *jefe* is more difficult to ascertain. The relatively low number of complaints against *jefes de armas* can not be taken as an indication of a general satisfaction with their deployment. The complaints

that were made suggest that non-Indians were more likely to appeal. Phrases used and grammatical proficiency suggest the authors were educated and, although claiming to be writing on behalf of a community suffering under tyranny, the possibility of self-interest, or factional and political intrigue can not be ruled out. Conversely, the practical difficulties for illiterate serranos to make formal complaints means that the true level of discontent among the majority Indian and poor mestizo population is hard to detect. In addition, in an atmosphere of repression, opportunities for plaintiffs to make their feelings known to outsiders would have been severely restricted.<sup>45</sup>

If any pattern can be detected from the complaints made against the *jefes de armas*, it is that the majority of them were made during the earlier, less secure, phase of the cacicazgo: a time when disorder was likely to be at its highest. Following years of civil war, former rebels were still at large in the Sierra representing a continued threat to regional peace. Within this environment of social disruption and uncertainty, Gabriel Barrios faced the task of marshalling his growing band of *cuerpos voluntarios* in a crusade to convert the Sierra into the tranquil region envisaged by his superiors.

### *The return to law and order in the Sierra*

By entrusting Gabriel Barrios with the task of pacifying the Sierra, the Sonorense administration was acknowledging that civilian police authority was extremely limited and that if coercive measures had to be employed to attain stability, then Barrios was the most appropriate agent. As already suggested, the coercive power that Barrios held was sparingly devolved to his *jefes*. It appears that he was, at least theoretically, concerned with controlling the abuses of his local representatives of law enforcement. As the above communiques

suggest, *jefes de armas* had a prime responsibility for maintaining law and order and for behaving in a manner befitting their positions of responsibility. This implies that law-abiding citizens within the Sierra need not fear that the cacicazgo's considerable influence would infringe upon their constitutional rights. Only those who failed to make the swift adjustment from wartime disruption to peacetime responsibilities had cause for anxiety. At its most extreme, this category included rebels, murderers and bandits who hampered efforts to establish peace. Yet the legendary harsh system of justice that Barrios imposed touched all: from murderers and cattle rustlers to chicken thieves, tax dodgers and even women of ill-repute.<sup>46</sup>

At first, before a more comprehensive system of *jefes de armas* had been established, serious challenges to law and order were met by the deployment of federal troops.<sup>47</sup> The request for assistance made by the municipal president of Ahuacatlán to the municipal president of Zacatlán in July 1920 is typical. The Ahuacatlán official reported that the community's sole police officer was unable to cope with the high incident of crime, much of which was being caused by criminals who had escaped from the local jail. The municipal president of Zacatlán responded by asking Bardomiano Barrios to deploy troops to re-establish order in the town.<sup>48</sup> However, as the correspondence between Demetrio Barrios and Captain Amaro in Huauchinango shows, *jefes de armas* increasingly assumed the task of lending support to local policing.

The harsh punishments that Gabriel Barrios inflicted on bandits still evokes memories among those who lived in the Sierra during the 1920s. The most common view of Barrios' methods is that he was ruthless but effective in combating violent crime. The municipal president of Tlaxcalantongo's description of the indiscriminate killings perpetrated by bandits provides an example of the extremes that such crimes reached. Anecdotal and circumstantial

evidence suggests that Barrios was equal to the challenge. Frequently the search for bandits would culminate in a violent exchange producing the deaths of gang leaders and followers.<sup>49</sup> Even those bandits taken alive could not be certain of surviving to face civil proceedings. Captain Amaro seemed particularly susceptible to attempted escapes by prisoners. On 1 May 1925, Amaro reported that the captured gang leader, Juan Jiménez, wanted for a range of crimes, tried to overpower his escort and was killed in the ensuing struggle.<sup>50</sup> Such arbitrary justice attracted the attention of Gruening, who commented on the execution by Barrios men of four suspects in Tuxpan, Veracruz, despite having successfully secured an *amparo* from the federal judge.<sup>51</sup>

Evidence of summary justice is strengthened by popular memory. Barrios' son, Arnulfo, remembers overhearing a conversation between two itinerant horse traders from Jalisco who were passing through Tetela de Ocampo. The men had seen three men hanged from the bough of a tree as a punishment for stealing chickens.<sup>52</sup> People in Tonalapa still point to the tree from which those found guilty of serious crimes and robbery were hung.<sup>53</sup> Similar testimonies can be found regarding the actions of *jefes de armas* as far afield as Libres.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, serranos throughout the Sierra confirm that the Barrios family imposed a strict regime of discipline and law enforcement. Yet, it is also clear that Barrios' methods included the threat of brutal force as much as its actual use.<sup>55</sup> Thus, intimidation was a vital weapon in Barrios' efforts to control the Sierra. Banditry decreased partly because the risks began to outweigh the benefits. The comparative protection of geographical isolation diminished in the face of a localised network of informants and policemen in regular contact with the regional cacique. Banditry may have also diminished due to a material improvement in the lives of the serranos. As will be argued in chapter five, if such economic improvements did have such an effect, the

catalyst for such a change was the regional cacique who possessed the capacity to control by force or patronage in equal measure.

In addition to the use of violent sanctions, Barrios employed a more pragmatic form of justice. As the son of one *jefe de armas* suggested, although Barrios killed many people, his control of the Sierra was achieved by a delicate balance of force, intimidation and co-operation.<sup>56</sup> Certainly, a more aggressive policy was pursued against bandits, rebels and, as will be argued in the next chapter, political enemies. Yet beyond these major challenges to public order lay the wider task of repairing the social fabric of communities and encouraging the serranos to resume their responsibilities as vecinos. In this respect, the *jefes de armas* play a role every bit as vital as that performed in combating banditry. It is worth returning to the terms of reference that Barrios gave his *jefes de armas* and the men under their control - their duties were to maintain public order and to protect their neighbours from molestation. While this might lead to clashes with bandits, it more frequently meant that *jefes de armas* would, for instance, oversee community fiestas to ensure that the festivities did not get out of hand, or take steps to curb the boisterous actions of immoral citizens, drunks and rowdies.<sup>57</sup>

The most common complaints against *jefes de armas* related to one particular aspect of the cacicazgo's efforts to re-establish a measure of public responsibility within communities. A rapidly expanding dimension of the Barrios cacicazgo throughout the 1920s was the promotion of regional development, particularly in the areas of transport and education. Such initiatives needed the active co-operation of the serranos, and *jefes de armas* were charged with ensuring that local authorities produced a positive response. In some cases, *jefes* were used to collect educational contributions, but by far the most onerous obligation placed upon serranos was the re-establishment of

*faenas*.<sup>58</sup> In the absence of adequate civil officials, the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that serranos satisfied these obligations fell upon the *jefes de armas*. Non-attendance would be followed by an early morning call by the members of the *cuerpo voluntario* and, if persuasion proved ineffective, force would be used to ensure compliance.

Complaints of excessive force used by Barrios troops and *jefes de armas* in enforcing *faena* attendance have sharpened the image of Barrios as a ruthless cacique who used rough justice and intimidation to get his way. Yet the evidence suggests that Barrios took a practical approach in disciplining recalcitrant *faeneros*. Despite popular belief, serranos were rarely killed for not attending *faenas* and neither were they commonly fined. More often, such individuals would be confined to prison, not to languish but to be forced to attend *faenas* by day and to be returned to jail by night.

This trend of practical punishment appears to have been extended to law-breakers in general. The so-called *ley de cajones* is still remembered and brings a wry smile to many serrano faces. Those found guilty of petty crimes and non-compliance with *faenas* were brought before Gabriel Barrios in Cuacuila. Their punishment was to carry baskets laden with stones through the streets of Zacatlán or Tetela de Ocampo, the stones being used to pave the very streets through which the culprit walked. The punishment blended physical toil with public humiliation: a particularly potent formula for the more affluent members of society that might be tempted to break the law. By the same token, both cabeceras could boast paved streets long before many other communities, including areas of Puebla City.

The imaginative, sometimes humorous, sense of justice combined with the more menacing aspect of Barrios' domination to create stability in the

Sierra.<sup>59</sup> As described in the previous chapter, despite the many charges levelled at Barrios and his methods, neither civilian nor military investigations found him guilty of any specific case. Barrios sought to control the actions of *jefes de armas* by making them accountable to nearby federal garrisons. Complaints received against *jefes* were referred for investigation. It was not uncommon for Barrios to send copies of the subsequent reports to his superior officers in Puebla City. On no occasion is there evidence to suggest that Barrios was forced by his superiors to remove or punish any of his *jefes de armas*. And, on only one occasion was Barrios ordered to replace one of his officers.<sup>60</sup>

In reality, punitive action against Barrios and his men rarely occurred, not because they were innocent of all the charges made against them, but because Barrios enjoyed a regional monopoly of force and used his position to produce general stability. The clear message sent to his superiors in Mexico City was that, above all else, Barrios was capable of converting the Sierra into a tranquil area where travellers and merchants could feel safe to use the region's network of roads without fear of attack.<sup>61</sup> A great deal of the success of Barrios' campaign against lawlessness was due to his use of federal troops and *cuerpos voluntarios*. Yet such a widespread reversion to peaceful coexistence could not be achieved by force and intimidation alone: such a transition suggests that Barrios was successful in obtaining co-operation from the serrano communities. Indeed, the very nature of the *jefe de armas*' job demanded that he liaise with other figures of authority within his community. In turn, these officials provided Barrios with independent source of information concerning the actions of the *jefes de armas*. The network of public security that Barrios developed depended upon no single individual. To place too much authority in the hands of one person may have created potential rivals. Barrios' success relied on the pervasive nature of his control at the local level. This control was



based upon the existence of several independent supporters within a community, each directly responsible to him.

### *Local political appointments*

Frequent dispatches from the Ministry of War reminding generals that they were forbidden from participating in politics only perpetuated the myth of political rectitude characterised by E. J. Palacios' ordinances for local government for the state of Puebla.<sup>62</sup> At the municipal level, democracy was ensured through annual elections for members of the *ayuntamiento*. In turn, the *ayuntamiento* was directly responsible to the state executive: the Governor. The secretary, tax collector and a municipal judge were externally nominated and not subject to periodic re-election by the community. In the *pueblos*, *juntas auxiliares* comprising a mayor, aldermen and trustees, joined forces with a civil registrar and his assistant in upholding local civil authority. It was the local authority's responsibility to employ police and guards for the local prison.

As Palacios' summary indicates, certain key positions within local government were outside the local democratic process. The position of secretary, for example, was not subject to election and therefore an individual could, in theory, retain this position for much of his life. Potentially, this placed the secretary in a position of considerable local influence. A good secretary might provide stability to a local administration that otherwise saw important positions of authority alternate between officials with short-term interests. A bad secretary, conversely, might use his secure tenure to systematically abuse his position. In any case, the appointment of influential offices, such as that of secretary, made the appointees indebted to those whose

continued support was vital for the retention of their posts. Such circumstances provided the optimum environment for patronage to thrive.

In 1927, the undersecretary for Education, Moisés Saenz, conducted a tour of inspection in the Sierra de Puebla. The report of his findings reached beyond his brief of commenting on educational affairs to include a number of observations on serrano life, including an assessment of local government. Saenz prefaced his comments with an outline of the historical precedents, where local *jefes políticos* were named by Lucas or Méndez who in turn nominated their secretaries as administrators of justice and, frequently, of education. Saenz added that the secretary was often the only *gente de razón*; the only 'civilising element' within a community.<sup>63</sup>

Referring to the situation under the 'patriarch' Gabriel Barrios, Saenz observed that municipal presidents were found in all *pueblos* and *ranchos*, and assistant judges in all *barrios*. Within the communities that he encountered, all these officials were Indians, very few spoke Spanish, and Indians made up the town council. Importantly, he suggested that the past custom of secretaries being appointed from outside the community was still a common occurrence. The Barrios family nominated all secretaries who continued to be seen as the main government agents within a community. The secretaries no longer played a major role in education but remained pivotal figures in the political and administrative relationship between the community and external authorities.

Finally, referring to the survival of a form of democracy, Saenz suggested that all important decisions continued to be brought before the official symbol of power, respect and order: the local authorities. However, he added that all serranos were aware that true power lay with the secretary and that the source of his influence was directly linked to his subordination to the Barrios

family. Saenz mused over who delude whom in this charade of local democracy. The Indians conducted local government with an air of democracy although Saenz believed that they were fully aware of the true situation, while the non-Indian created the pretence of democracy in order to retain control. Yet, by recognising and acting within the pretence, Saenz wondered whether the Indians had nonetheless found the most effective way of preserving the remnants of racial dignity. A more independent stance might only have served to encourage actions by those with true political power which would have further shattered the illusion of Indian self-determination.

The substance of Saenz's observations regarding the position of the secretary in the Sierra de Puebla was accurate. As early as 1920, Barrios influenced the appointment of local officials. In a letter from the authorities of Xochitlaxco, (Tepetzintla) an appeal was made to the municipal president of Zacatlán to use any means at his disposal to stop the replacement of their local president by a man 'recommended' by the Barrios family. The vecinos were satisfied with the incumbent president and asked the Zacatlán authorities to assist in blocking the change and to remove from office the present secretary, a personal friend of the proposed president.<sup>64</sup> In another case, a letter from Bardoniano Barrios to Fernando Sosa in San Mateo, provides conclusive evidence of direct involvement:

My apologies for the inconvenience, but as it has been necessary to transfer the present secretary, Manuel Hernández, to another *pueblo*, this leaves a vacancy in San Mateo. I should appreciate it if you could talk to the municipal president and the aldermen and persuade them to allow Señor Francisco Arroyo, a competent and diligent individual, to fill the vacancy. I trust that the local authority will agree to my proposal and that Señor Arroyo will soon receive news of his appointment. In the meantime, if I can be of any assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.<sup>65</sup>

Between the lines of this letter, it is possible to perceive a little of the pretence that Saenz would sense a few years later. By leaving the formality of

the secretary's appointment to the ayuntamiento, Bardomiano Barrios kept the facade of local democracy alive. Whether or not the last paragraph of the letter conveys an element of menace is open to interpretation, but there remains little doubt that all officials in the Sierra knew where ultimate power lay. Any complaints against the abuses of secretaries would have little effect unless a good case could be made before the Barrios family. Evidence of the family's control over secretarial appointments is exemplified by a brief glance at correspondence emanating from Cuacuila. In one example, Demetrio Barrios was asked to 'find' a position for the father of a friend.<sup>66</sup> On another occasion, a former secretary asked if Barrios could help him resolve a personal predicament:

My main purpose in writing is to ask if you would be able to find me employment in Zacatlán or elsewhere in the Sierra as I am considering returning to the region shortly. Although I presently hold the position as tax collector here in Papantla, my income is not sufficient for my expenses. As you know, I have a large family and with the prices of even essential commodities being very expensive here, I find my outgoings rising daily. I remember that you, and your late brother Bardomiano, have always been good people who have tried to help those, like myself, that have needed to approach you.

You will remember that we got to know each other quite well during my time as secretary in San Andres de Tlayehualancingo, and that during the elections, I worked to helped you in every way I could. I am thinking of returning to the Sierra in October, and it is for this reason that I am contacting you now in order that I will not have difficulties in finding work upon my return. Here in Papantla, the climate is very hot and unhealthy, there is a great deal of sickness and I find it impossible to continue living in such conditions. Since we arrived here I and my family have suffered constant sickness. Not wishing to take up any more of your time, I hope that you will be able to respond favourably to my request.<sup>67</sup>

This is a clear illustration of how the Barrios system of patronage functioned. Meza y Mora called upon past connections with the Barrios family, notably his co-operation in electoral matters, as a means of lending weight to his request. It is clear that the Barrios family were considered to hold the key for resolving personal problems. Equally common, however, were requests from entire communities or groups asking for a resolution to problems ranging from

abuses of position to land disputes with neighbouring villages.<sup>68</sup> The majority of complaints regarding the improper use of power by secretaries were not sent, as should have happened, to the state governor but were directed to Barrios himself.<sup>69</sup>

Barrios' influence over local appointments clearly went beyond the selection of secretaries. Tax inspectors, teachers and directors of schools frequently benefited from the favour shown by the Barrios family. This suggests that the family's influence went far beyond that identified even by Saenz. There is no doubt that the brothers directly interfered in the local democratic process, in some communities placing aldermen, and in others, municipal presidents, into ayuntamientos in order to guarantee compliance with the family's policies. Simón Torres, *jefe de armas* in Tlapacoya, asked Demetrio Barrios to endorse a list of candidates for the community's next ayuntamiento.<sup>70</sup> Artemio González of Villa Juárez did likewise:

I have the pleasure of enclosing with this letter a list of candidates that we have jointly assessed and approved to take part in the impending local elections in Villa Juárez. All the candidates share your own ideals and each would work for the benefit of the people.<sup>71</sup>

Prior vetting of candidates provided an alternative method of obtaining a compliant ayuntamiento and negated the need for more blatant interference. In other cases, however, Barrios is accused of more direct manipulation: of imposing ayuntamiento members in the cabeceras of Tlatlauquitepec and other municipalities.<sup>72</sup> On a different occasion, the *jefe de armas* of Caxhuacán sought guidance from Barrios following an attempt by local people to replace the municipal president with an unsuitable alternative.<sup>73</sup>

Throughout the Sierra de Puebla the Barrios family made its influence felt in most areas of public life. It does not follow, however, that the cacicazgo

became involved in the administrative affairs of all serrano communities to the extent demonstrated above. Indeed, given the size of the region under his control and the number of years that he retained command, Gabriel Barrios only interfered directly in the minority of local communities. What was more pervasive was the feeling among serranos that Barrios had the potential to interfere if he saw fit, and that few external authorities could stop him from doing so. As Saenz suggested, many communities were participating in a deception in which local officials were allowed to perpetuate the image of democracy within strictly limited parameters. It is almost as if the serranos, in exercising constitutional rights to elect their representatives, were adding a clause to the Constitution, 'provided those elected meet with the approval of Gabriel Barrios'. This would leave space, for example, for an Indian community to stand firm in its determination to refuse the imposition of non-Indian secretaries. In communities where ethnic resistance was strong, Barrios would rarely ignore local feeling. As long as the secretary chosen satisfied Barrios' more general requirements, the will of the people could appear to have been satisfied. As in the case of *jefes de armas*, Barrios sought leaders who enjoyed influence within a community. The main proviso that Barrios imposed was that these individuals should demonstrate by their actions that they recognised that ultimate power lay with the cacique.

For those communities that did resent Barrios' interference, the options of protest were limited. Given that Barrios enjoyed such control of public security in the Sierra, any hint of armed resistance could incur the wrath of *cuerpos voluntarios* and/or federal troop detachments. More limited displays of violent displeasure fared little better. In April 1928 150 men presented themselves at the municipal offices in Hueytlalpan and assaulted the secretary and the school teacher. They later threw the secretary, judges and other public employees into jail. Barrios sent a detachment of troops to investigate the

problem. The officer in charge, Amador Uribe, reported that while some of the crowd had simply followed the orders of others, a core group of protesters had complained that the secretary had imposed excessive *faenas* and increased charges for drinking water. The school teacher was accused of trying to force children to work in an orchard against the wishes of their parents. Uribe's investigations concluded that the charges were unfounded, the secretary and others were released, and Demetrio Barrios ordered the conspirators to be escorted to Zacatlán to 'clarify' their grievances. Their fate remains unclear.<sup>74</sup>

If violent forms of opposition proved fruitless, the official appeal procedure promised little better. Complaints to cabecera authorities against the Barrios family were futile given that most of the cabeceras were controlled by Barrios supporters. Any complaints were automatically referred to the family who would send troops or *cuerpos voluntarios* to investigate the problem. The only peaceful alternatives open to local authorities were to by-pass the cabecera and appeal directly to the governor or the president of the Republic. As will be argued in the chapter four, the state governor was rarely able to influence Barrios' actions and could do little more than appeal to the Ministry of War. Likewise, complaints to the president were, more often than not, referred to the Ministry of War or to the state governor. While Barrios was seen by the federal government as a crucial element in the pacification of the Sierra, it was unlikely that any complaints against him would provoke the government to remove him from the region. There is little evidence that any significant pressure was placed on Barrios to refrain from meddling in local politics. This remained the case until the final years of the cacicazgo by which time the external political climate had considerably changed.

Even where evidence does exist of restraint being placed on Barrios, an air of farce surrounded the proceedings. In July 1927 Lieutenant Colonel

Vicente Escobedo, *Jefe de Operaciones Militares* in Puebla, informed Barrios that the governor of Puebla had complained about the political interference of Barrios' troops in Teziutlán. Escobedo ordered Barrios to instruct his troops to desist from mixing in politics. Less than a month later, Escobedo's brother-in-law was appointed tax inspector for Zacapoaxtla and Escobedo asked Barrios to use his influence to make his relation's term of office in Zacapoaxtla as smooth as possible.<sup>75</sup> Here one sees the options open to the governor: the official method of complaint against a military officer was to inform his superior officer. Yet while Escobedo reminded Barrios of the limits of his jurisdiction, when theory turned into practice, Escobedo was as keen as anyone to make use of the informal power that Barrios held.

Redfield's study of Tepoztlán provides an interesting contemporary comparison with Saenz's observations on the social and political structure of the Sierra de Puebla.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, Redfield provides an additional perspective for viewing the situation in many serrano villages. While Tepoztlán's annual election of the municipal council resembled the situation in the Sierra de Puebla, Redfield suggests that the council members were in fact chosen by the state government in Cuernavaca on the basis of their recognised loyalty to the state government. Redfield adds that the municipal council held little real power, less prestige, and merely functioned as a local administrative body of the state government. Aldermen invariably came from the less educated sector of society, '*los locos*' as they were known locally. Due to the relative impotence of local politics in Tepoztlán, Redfield concludes that politics fell into the same category as the organisation of religious fiestas; a form of play enjoyed by the less influential sector of the community. Despite the solemnity and internal respect associated with the performance of such duties, local politics in Tepoztlán was a trivial pastime for the masses while the important decisions were made elsewhere. The more educated sector of Tepoztlán society, Redfield



suggests, viewed local politics with some distain and found that a more effective method of introducing progressive reform into the community lay in their personal and commercial connections with the state capital.

Yet, in the Sierra de Puebla, something fundamentally different was occurring. A distinction should be made between the power struggle in the cabeceras and in the *pueblos*. In the ayuntamientos of Sierra cabeceras, it was not the '*locos*', but the '*gente de razón*' who were contesting control of the municipal councils. These same ayuntamientos were the political battleground for factions aligned to the state governor and those loyal to Barrios. The degree to which Barrios could retain control of cabecera politics acts as an indicator of his changing fortunes in the Sierra as a whole. Moreover, even if the high degree of Indian involvement in local politics of the *pueblos* matches Redfield's conclusions on political life in Tepoztlán, one important difference existed. Those non-Indians among the community who concluded that real influence lay in establishing ties beyond the sphere of local politics, did not find these links in the state capital, but in the remote mountain village of Cuacuila. Imposition of the councils did take place, yet unlike Tepoztlán, it was not the state government but the Barrios family who was the intervening force.

Indian participation in bogus democratic politics has received attention in other recent anthropological studies of the Sierra de Puebla. The studies of Viqueira and Palerm, and of Buchler, demonstrate the ability of communities to modify their social structures to adapt to external pressures that threaten the status quo. It is clear that Sierra communities could not avoid external influence merely by retreating into a cultural shell. In her study of the Nahua community of Zacatipan (Cuetzalan), Lourdes-Arizpe observed that ceremonial and civil cargo performance played important roles in an Indian community's struggle to balance traditional values and external influences. It is clear, for example, that

the community tried to limit outside interference by insisting that the pivotal position of secretary be occupied by an Indian. Although posts were offered for annual election, in reality the appointments of municipal president and aldermen were made by dominant factions within the community. Yet, Lourdes-Arizpe noted that the economic and commercial factors that bound the community to its cabecera, introduced an element of bias into the community in favour of certain political figures in Cuetzalan. Zacatipan outwardly appeared to be sustaining a hierarchical system that produced legitimate leaders in accordance with tradition while keeping the outside world at a distance. Behind the scenes, however, essential connections with non-Indian society fundamentally undermined Zacatipan's autonomy.

These studies create a picture of a region in transition. While this process may have been moving at differing speeds, the facade of local democracy identified in all communities acted as a face-saving device allowing the holders of traditional prestige credibility both within the community and in their dealings with the outside world. To most Sierra communities, the external influence of the 1920s was personified by Gabriel Barrios. As in the case of military recruitment, Barrios' retention of an Indian cultural identity helped to soothe the potentially fraught relationships between community and cacique. The patron in Cuacuila held the power to resolve most, if not all, of their problems. They could converse with Barrios in their own language and be reasonably confident that they were speaking to someone who understood the Sierra and its particular challenges. Faced with the options of appealing, in Spanish, to the state governor or president of the Republic, with little hope of redress, or reasoning with Barrios in *nahuatl*, most serranos opted for the latter.

Patronage of a more direct kind underscored Barrios' placement of favoured individuals into positions of local authority. Although it has already

been shown that *jefes de armas* could not expect to earn a wage, the mere fact that such figures were recognised as possessing the support of the cacicazgo would have brought more tangible benefits. The projected accounts of Tetela de Ocampo's ayuntamiento illustrate the benefits to be gained from being granted a position of authority by Barrios.

Annual Expenditure on salaries for 1920<sup>77</sup>

Municipal President	\$912.50
Secretary	\$730.00
Correctional Judge	\$365.00
Secretary to the Correctional Judge	\$547.50
Director of the Ocampo school	\$912.50
Assistant director	\$638.75
Keeper of the public clock	\$ 60.00

Given that the average earnings in the Sierra was little more than a peso a day, the value of obtaining a post in local government was considerable.<sup>78</sup> Of particular interest is that at a time when funding for education was generally scarce, the director of the largest school in Tetela de Ocampo received a salary equal to that of the municipal president. Barrios increasingly assumed control of education in the Sierra, both nominating and funding the payment of directors and their assistants. Particularly in cabeceras like Tetela de Ocampo, directors were not professional appointments but were found from within the commercially dominant, non-Indian sectors of society. Such lucrative appointments helped Barrios to extend his network of patronage into sectors of non-Indian serrano society.

In return for favours bestowed, Barrios naturally expected to receive the allegiance of the beneficiaries. Loyalty took many forms but, in a mountainous region such as the Sierra de Puebla, perhaps its most valuable manifestation was the provision of the independent intelligence that each and every appointee could provide. With several individuals within one community separately owing their allegiances to Barrios, each acted as a means of countering the excesses of the others. In this way, Barrios quickly learned of abuses by secretaries, municipal presidents, or of any relationships developing between *jefes de armas* and other holders of local power that threatened public order and/or might lead to a challenge to his own supremacy.

***Faenas: a practical application of the cacicazgo network***

While the Barrios family may have been interested in limiting the development of dangerous alliances among influential local figures, the more universal objective of instilling public order in the Sierra depended on co-operation between these individuals. As has already been suggested, solutions to more violent criminal acts of banditry and rebellion were beyond the limited means of the local police. Many communities had neither a police force nor prison guards and frequently called upon Demetrio Barrios to release troops based in Zacatlán to perform routine policing duties. Liaison between the civil local authorities and Barrios' men, both federal troops and *cuerpos voluntarios*, was essential for the system to function. Overall control, however, was firmly in the hands of the Barrios family. Whether it was a judge needing men to arrest or escort a criminal, or a municipal president wanting a *jefe de armas* to police a fiesta or collect overdue taxes, all applications were directed towards the family.

The successful re-establishment of public order in the Sierra stemmed from the harsh punishment inflicted on persistent, violent criminals as well as lesser felons. Years of civil war had traumatised the nation, the atrocities carried out by Mexicans against their compatriots had produced a violent, arbitrary system of justice. Faced with the stemming such barbarity in the Sierra, there is little doubt that Gabriel Barrios elected to solve the problem not by appealing for restraint but by meeting violence with even greater violence: he coerced bandits into submission. However, the vital difference between the form of violence that Barrios produced and that previously experienced in the Sierra, was that the aggression assumed a more controlled form. This is not to say that it fell within legally defined limits, but the spectre of anarchical violence committed by all sides subsided. While those who opposed the Barrios family could expect little mercy, the chances of being the innocent victim of random crime diminished. Travelling merchants, for example, could feel more confident using the thoroughfares of the Sierra, while those who attempted to attack them ran the risk of brutal treatment if caught. It is somewhat ironic that law and order was achieved by a regime that showed little or no respect for legal proceedings.

Yet the restoration of stability in the Sierra was only partially achieved by tackling the more violent perpetrators of crime. Gabriel Barrios was not content to let the serranos sink back into a form of pre-revolutionary slumber. The past had no place in the Sierra of the 1920s and the need to renew a sense of individual commitment to the community was identified and developed to unprecedented levels. The most obvious manifestation of this was the reimposition of *faenas*.

Since pre-Columbian times, *faenas* had been used in the Sierra de Puebla to coordinate efforts towards tasks of community benefit: such as the clearing of

water channels and the construction and maintenance of inter-communal paths. The Revolution had disrupted such efforts and as the damage from each year's rains failed to be repaired, so worsened the already arduous task of travelling through the region.<sup>79</sup>

Gabriel Barrios regarded the reintroduction of *faenas* as essential for the regeneration of the Sierra. His projects, however, were more ambitious than any previously contemplated. He planned to develop a system of communications that would link the most remote corners of the Sierra to the economic and social benefits of the outside world. In the absence of sufficient federal funds, the demand for *faenas* greatly exceeded those of the past, and for a region that had become accustomed to life without *faenas*, their reimposition on a more onerous scale was bound to cause tension. Although these development projects will be more fully investigated in chapter five, the administration of *faenas* reveals much concerning the local power structure within the region.

Throughout the Revolution, many serrano communities had, albeit in a haphazard fashion, continued to keep local paths in reasonable condition. With the economic life of a community depending upon its products being sold at a local market, it was in everyone's interest to keep the paths open. Only in communities where local authority had broken down or was failing to convince its people either to continue such practices or to provide additional co-operation, does one find evidence of intervention.

The overall responsibility for organising and ensuring attendance of *faenas* fell upon the local ayuntamiento. Lists of all eligible individuals were taken from the electoral registers and the local judge was made responsible for ensuring attendance on the day of the *faena*.<sup>80</sup> While locally-based *faenas* raised

comparatively little objection, when communities or individuals resisted calls to work in more distant locations, for example, on the construction of national highways, the response of Barrios' men left little doubt where power lay.<sup>81</sup>

Even before the Barrios family had firmly established control over the Sierra, Gabriel Barrios did not hesitate to remind local authorities of their obligations to maintain good communication links.<sup>82</sup> The ambiguity concerning a person's constitutional protection against forced labour and his moral obligations to co-operate with works that ensured revolutionary progress, paved the way for *faenas* to be portrayed less as a voluntary gesture and more as a legal obligation. Local authorities were held responsible for enforcing compliance with this obligation, despite the fact that few authorities had either the respect or the human resources to do so. Faced with such pressure, authorities frequently asked Barrios to release federal troops or *cuerpos voluntarios* to add strength to the judge's calls for attendance. As in other aspects of local government, the channels of communication and influence were vertical rather than lateral: the judge or municipal president might benefit from the co-operation given to him by the local *jefe de armas*, but all requests and permission had to be channelled through Barrios.

Barrios' use of *jefes de armas* and federal troops to enforce *faena* attendance provides a rich seam of anecdotal evidence to support his image as a brutal cacique. As has already been argued, it is unlikely that the reputed harsh treatment of objectors to *faenas* was widespread; in general a more constructive, if extra-legal, approach to such individuals was adopted. This is not to say that the presence of guards to watch over the *faeneros* was not greatly resented, nor that *jefes de armas* and federal troops were above using disproportionate force to make vecinos attend. The widespread hanging of objectors, however, was not a policy that Barrios favoured.<sup>83</sup>

The appropriate balance between coercion and cooperation was the vital element that characterised Gabriel Barrios' philosophy, not only in the operation of *faenas* but in the administration of the cacicazgo in general. Powerful though Barrios was, it is unlikely that many communities felt the influence of the Barrios family on a regular basis. Despite greatly improved communications, the topography of the Sierra favoured a degree of autonomy in daily life. In practice, this would have allowed each community freedom to choose the most appropriate way in which to comply with the periodic demands made upon it. Only when individual or community resistance occurred was the machinery of the cacicazgo swiftly deployed to eradicate potential threats. Any number of people within a vicinity would have the incentive to inform Barrios of developments liable to cause concern. Barrios' judicious intervention in local politics ensured that the number of cases of resistance was low. In the few situations where local patronage and persuasion proved insufficient, Barrios could always deploy a *cuerpo voluntario* or a federal troop unit.

In certain respects, the manner in which Gabriel Barrios controlled the Sierra during the 1920s resembles methods used by Porfirio Díaz on a national scale in the nineteenth century, in that both leaders used a varying combination of coercion and patronage to ensure overall control. The important military role that Gabriel Barrios occupied during the post-revolutionary years provided him with the opportunity of expanding the deployment of force. Each garrison of the 46th. Battalion assumed responsibility for the stability of its area of operations. If such garrison are likened to Díaz's network of state governors, then the *jefes de armas* resemble the *jefes políticos* as the executive's



representatives at the local level, ensuring that stability was maintained and that development projects progressed unopposed.

Where the Barrios model departs from its predecessor, however, is in the degree of control exercised by the centre. Barrios' garrisons were regimented by a military discipline that forbade officers the freedom of actions which Díaz had been obliged to concede to his governors. Barrios' officers were, in fact, frequently members of his own family and this enabled Barrios to invest a measure of trust in his representatives to monitor the actions of *jefe de armas*. In addition, Barrios' representation at the most local level was far more complete than Díaz had been able to achieve. Barrios' local officials were municipal presidents, school teachers, and secretaries as often as *jefes de armas* and, in this sense, Barrios' control of the Sierra was more complete than Díaz's control of the Republic.

Greater control bred greater confidence and provided Barrios with more scope to adopt a flexible approach in resolving problems. Patronage could be given a chance to work before coercion need be considered. Whereas the Porfirian peace had often been marred by local rebellion, Barrios' control was more complete. The major violent challenges to the Barrios family in the Sierra were local versions of national problems: the Delahuertista, Gomista and Cristero uprisings. More accurately, however, these violent factional clashes reflected a local version of a broader struggle for regional supremacy between Barrios and the state governor. In facing this particular challenge, Barrios had two major advantages: federal approval and security of tenure.

### Footnotes for Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup> Lourdes-Arizpe, *Parentesco y Economía*, p. 60.

The fact that Indian serranos did not necessarily understand, nor wish to become involved in the Revolution is indicated by the comments of Don Pedro Xoltoc, a witness of a battle between the forces of Gabriel Barrios and Salvador Vega Bernal.

<sup>2</sup> Mejía Castelán, S., *Huauchinango Histórico*, (Puebla, 1965), pp. 289-93.

The direct fiscal consequences of banditry in Huauchinango were meticulously recorded by local officials.

<sup>3</sup> AMT de O, Caja 424.

Examples of such tactics were given in a communique dated 19 June 1914 from the commander of Carrancista forces for Northern Puebla to Ricardo Márquez Galindo, local commander in Tetela de Ocampo.

<sup>4</sup> AMT de O, Caja 411. Letter dated 24 Dec. 1913.

<sup>5</sup> See: Hobsbawm, E.J., *Bandits*, (Harmondsworth, 1972); Slatta, R.W. (ed.), *Bandidos. The Varieties of Latin American Banditry*, (New York, 1987); Joseph, G.M., 'On the Trail of Latin American Bandits', in *Latin American Research Review (LARR)*, 25, 1989, pp. 7-53.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with José María Barrios, 6 Nov. 1993, Tonalapa, Tetela de Ocampo.

It is interesting, however, that Barrios' son believes that his father was convinced that the best way to reduce crime in the Sierra was to improve the economic opportunities of serrano families. This was presented as the logical reason for Barrios investing so much effort in development projects during his time in the Sierra. The fact that Barrios recognised a link between crime and poor economic conditions suggests the existence of an element of social banditry in the region. However, the lack of documentary evidence impedes any analysis of the extent to which social, as opposed to anti-social banditry, prevailed during the 1920s.

<sup>7</sup> Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, pp. 499-500.

The comments were made by a Mexico City lawyer interviewed in 1927 and reflects his opinions on corruption in the Mexican judiciary. The death penalty had, in fact, been abolished under the Constitution of 1857.

<sup>8</sup> ADN, H, XI/481.5/223, c. 120, f. 143.

This letter, dated 3 Oct. 1917, followed a discussion between the two men in which provisional approval was given, and preceded a formal request being sent to Congress.

<sup>9</sup> AMT de O, Caja 4, Seguridad Pública, 27 Oct. 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Demetrio Santa Fe, a mestizo from Totutla, (Tetela) was to play a prominent political role within the Barrios cacicazgo. For many years he had been a trusted adviser to Juan Francisco Lucas and, after a brief period in uniform, assumed a similar role at the side of Gabriel Barrios. Santa Fe saw himself very much in the role of the provincial intellectual; he produced various think-pieces relating to the need for development in the Sierra, many of which bore a striking resemblance to the policies later adopted by Barrios. He later became a federal congress deputy where he continued to represent Barrios' interests.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Martínez's strict regime had been given at least tacit support by Lucas. One can presume that, as a Lucas adviser, Santa Fe had approved of such support.

<sup>12</sup> APGL. See the 'Programa' dated 4 Nov. 1913 written by Demetrio Santa Fe.

<sup>13</sup> APGL. Letter dated 20 July 1917 from Demetrio Santa Fe to Abraham Lucas.

<sup>14</sup> APGL. Report dated 4 Sept. 1917 entitled '*Confidencias. Guardias civiles y servicio de guarniciones.*'

15 Mejía Castelán, *Huauchinango Histórico*, pp. 296-97.

Infact, the formation of local voluntary forces to combat banditry had already begun in towns such as Huauchinango, Pahuatlán and Villa Juárez.

While it appears that Santa Fe saw this as an organisation under the control of the state executive, he did suggest that regular security reports should be sent from the *cuerpos* to the Ministry of War.

16 AMC, Caja 137, Presidencia, exp. 142.

Order dated 4 Feb. 1918 from the Agente de Ministerio Público, Puebla to Juez Menor, Zacapoaxtla.

ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 3, ff. 813-14.

17 The following examples typify the nature of the problems experienced:

AMT de O, Caja 420, no. 15.

On 25 May 1913 a group of people from Zapotitlan raided Zongozotla, arresting local officials and taking over \$400 of public funds for the 'revolutionary cause'.

AMT de O, Caja 413.

On 14 June 1914 the military commander in Tetela reminded citizens of civil and military regulations restricting nocturnal reunions which caused disturbances of the peace. This followed several incidents in which rockets and guns had been fired.

AMT de O, Caja 424.

An internal military communique dated 19 June 1914 reveals the alarming frequency of bandits, not recognised by any revolutionary group, raiding towns and stealing goods and money.

AMT de O, Caja 2, exp. 130, Justicia.

A report on criminal proceedings in the municipality of Tetela de Ocampo recorded no less than 85 cases of robbery in 1916.

AMT de O, Caja 11, exp. 29, Justicia.

On 22 Feb. 1918 Gabriel Barrios ordered a detachment of his troops to capture a suspect accused of rape by the authorities in Tetela.

AMT de O, Caja 16, Seguridad Pública.

On 20 Oct. 1918 Demetrio Santa Fe reported the widespread abuses of power by the municipal president and an alderman of Huitzilán. The remaining members of the ayuntamiento in Huitzilán asked Barrios to send a detachment of troops to investigate the charges and to maintain public order while the process continued.

AMZ'n, Justicia, Caja 1, exp. 3, 309.

Correspondence in August 1919 refers to complaints by the people of Jilotzingo against the unsatisfactory actions of their local judge in dealing with various crimes committed in their community.

AMT de O. Caja 20, exp. 29, Seguridad Pública.

On 24 Sept. 1919 the municipal president of Tetela asked Barrios to deploy troops in order to help the local police guard the town's jail. Ten men were made available under the supervision of the local *jefe de la guarnición*.

18 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925, Telegrammes January 1925.

A telegramme dated 14 Jan. 1925, from the Zacatlán headquarters of the 46th. Battalion to General Roberto Cruz, *Jefe de Operaciones Militares*, Puebla detailed the battalion's present deployment. Garrisons were located in Cuacuila, Zacatlán, Chignahuapan, Tlaxco, Tetela, Ahuazotepec (Huauchinango), Zacapoaxtla and Teziutlán. Troop numbers totalled one commander, twenty officers and 464 troops.

19 ADN, C, 2-1145, f. 171.

On 25 Feb. 1922 Gabriel Barrios wrote a letter to his military superiors in Puebla defending himself against inflammatory remarks in *Las Noticias*, of Mexico City. The *Jefe de Operaciones Militares* forwarded a copy of the letter to the Ministry of War

adding that in his opinion, Barrios was a loyal and honourable officer who was working to end the banditry that had hampered the Sierra in the past.

20 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Letters sent/received April-June 1923.  
Letter dated 2 April 1923 from Luna to Bardomiano Barrios.

21 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Letters sent/received April-June 1923.  
Letter dated 20 April 1923 from Becerril, reply dated 21 April 1923.

22 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1924. Telegrammes sent/received January 1924.

23 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1924. Telegrammes sent/received February 1924.  
Although not stated, Huidobro's force was probably mustered to repel the local Delahuertista threat posed by the Salvador Vega Bernal.

24 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1927. Telegrammes October 1927.

25 Falcón, 'Military Caciques', p. 101.

26 Pansters, *Politics and Power in Puebla*, p. 47.

27 FAC y T. Ministry of War, Gav. 63, Exp. 79, leg. 14/14, ff. 680-83.  
Although no date is given, from the description of the road network already completed, the report must have been produced towards the end of Barrios' period of control in the Sierra.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928.

In 1928 Barrios produced a telephone directory which confirms that almost 500 telephones had been installed in the Sierra.

28 AMZ'n, Presidencia, Caja 14, 41, 745. Gobernación.

A reply to a state questionnaire by the municipal president of Zacatlán revealed that the majority of the municipalities in the district had from 1 to 3 armed groups. All were licensed to carry arms and all were responsible to Gabriel Barrios.

29 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Letters sent/received April-June 1923.

In a letter dated 13 Dec. 1923 to A. Barron, *jefe de armas* of the Rancho de Rinconada, Bardomiano Barrios referred to the consignment of ammunition given to the *jefe* and reminded him to use it sparingly due to the more general shortage of ammunition.

30 Various interviews with José María Barrios during November and December 1993, Tonalapa, Tetela.

31 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45, Anexo no. 3 - Pag. 1.

32 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Correspondence September 1925.

Letter dated 22 Sept. 1925 from Barrios informs the municipal president of Amixtlán of Alfredo Galindo's appointment.

33 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1931 onwards.

See letter dated 5 Jan. 1945 from Demetrio Barrios to González Moreno, of Hueytlalpan.

34 Interview with Señora Beatrice Galindo, (daughter of Ramón Galindo), 31 Dec. 1993, Zacatlán.

35 Ibid.

36 A greater appreciation of how Barrios was able to manipulated existing factionalism is given in chapter six.

37 Interview with Señora Beatrice Galindo, daughter of Ramón Galindo, 31 Dec. 1993, Zacatlán.

When asked whether any racial tensions hampered the Galindo brothers' acceptance of Barrios, Señora Galindo responded that no tension existed whatsoever. She did mention, however, Barrios' habit of arriving at the family's house unannounced and

expecting to be given a meal and a bed for the night, inferring that such a lack of manners was due to his Indian background. No doubt, Barrios was conducting one of his famed nocturnal tours of inspection, satisfying himself that all was well with the cacicazgo.

38 Viqueira & Palerm, 'Alcoholismo, Brujería y Homocido', pp. 7-36.

39 Buchler, 'La organización de una aldea mexicana', pp. 237-63.

40 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Reports for February 1925.

See Amaro's letter dated 28 Feb. 1925, and Barrios reply sent on 1 March 1925.

41 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1921. Letters sent/received January 1921.

42 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Letters sent/received January-March 1923.

Letters sent by Bardomiano Barrios to seven *jefes* during Feb. and March 1923.

43 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Correspondence sent in October 1925.

Demetrio Barrios' letter of Oct. 1925 sent to Francisco Lechuga, *jefe de armas* of Cuamaxalco, illustrates that not all *jefes* were allowed to act above the law. Referring to abuses alleged to have been committed by one of Lechuga's men, Demetrio Barrios ordered Lechuga to place the accused at the disposal of the civil judicial authorities where he could be judged in accordance with the law.

44 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Letters sent/received April-June 1923.

Letter dated 11 April 1923 from Bardomiano Barrios to Manuel Alvarado, Camotepec, Pue.

45 One informant who lived in Tetela de Ocampo during the 1920s recalls risking his life to smuggle anonymous letters of complaint against the Barrios family out of the municipality.

46 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Reports for May 1926.

On 4 May 1926 Daniel Carlos, the *jefe de armas* for Coyutla, Ver., advised Demetrio Barrios of the bad example set by the '*vida libertina*' of Señora Guadalupe, viuda de Llano. The *jefe* explained that her immoral behaviour was conducted in a house that bordered the 'Parque Reforma' and her presence was causing true indignation within respectable society and tarnishing the respectable name of her deceased husband.

47 *El Monitor*, 19 Jan. 1921, no. 917. reported that military authorities in Teziutlán had captured a bandit leader, Odilon Almonte, together with 30 to 40 of his men, thus bringing an end to a reign of terror against local campesinos and landowners. It is probable that the federal troops belonged to the 46th. Battalion.

AMZ'n, Caja 16, exp. 6, 18, Seguridad Pública.

On 26 Oct. 1921, Bardomiano Barrios received a request from the president of the provisional council of Zacatlán to send a detachment of troops to assist the two law enforcement agents of the Ranchería de Ayotla in their pursuit of a dangerous criminal.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1922. Communiques issued August 1922.

On 24 Aug. 1922 Barrios informed General Manuel L. Ortiz in Puebla City, that sixty troops from the garrison at Coyutla had responded to news of atrocities by rebels in Entabladero, Ver. In the ensuing clash, the rebel leader, Francisco Pérez, was killed and a further ten rebels injured. Ten federal troops were injured and four horses killed. The ferocity of the battle is indicated by the report that 5,600 bullets were expended by federal forces. One cannot rule out the possibility, however, that such figures might have been inflated so that the Barrios family could build a healthy private reserve of arms and ammunition.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Reports for May 1925.

On 4 May 1925 the municipal president of Honey asked Barrios to release a detachment of troops garrisoned at nearby Pahuatlán. Barrios' attention was drawn to the banditry and high levels of crime that existed in the area and was requested to help the ayuntamiento, as he had helped so many others, in combating the problem.

48 AMZ'n, Caja 2, exp. 6, 21, Seguridad Pública.

Communique dated 29 July 1920 from the municipal president to Barrios. Interestingly, on this occasion, Bardomiano Barrios was unable to respond positively to this request, saying that his troops were occupied elsewhere. This probably reflected a situation in which Barrios had ordered his troops to maintain a low profile pending the results of an investigation by Obregón's military staff regarding future military arrangements in the Sierra.

49 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1924. Correspondence for October 1924.

On 5 Oct. 1924 Demetrio Barrios informed General Roberto Cruz, *Jefe de Operaciones Militares*, Puebla, that a detachment of troops garrisoned at Xiutetelco, (Teziutlán) had pursued and caught three bandits responsible for innumerable crimes in the area. The men resisted arrest causing injury to one of the soldiers. In the ensuing struggle, all three bandits were killed.

50 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Telegrammes received May 1925.

AMZ'n Caja 6, exp. 17, 17.

On 30 June 1927, in a similar incident, the murderer, Enrique Ponce Ibarra tried to take advantage of the dark and rain to escape his escort while being escorted from the Estación de Ahuazotepec to Zacatlán. Related correspondence suggests that the accused had lodged a *juicio de amparo* to protect himself from Barrios troops who, he was convinced, were trying to kill him.

It appears that such incidents were not restricted to federal soldiers:

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Correspondence for February 1928.

On 19 Feb. 1928 Demetrio Barrios was informed by his half-brother Ubaldo, from Villa Juárez, that following his orders, the *jefe de los voluntarios* of San Pedro Ytzila had arrested a suspect named Joaquín Balderrabano. Balderrabano had tried to escape and was subsequently shot and killed.

51 Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, p. 326.

This incident was reported to President Calles by a federal judge on 7 March 1927.

52 Interview with Arnulfo Barrios Aco, 24 Sept. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.

53 Interview with Alejandro L. Huerta Mora, 23 Oct. 1993, Tonalapa, Tetela.

54 Interview with Señor Limón, 29 Nov. 1993, Tepeyahualco, Libres.

55 Barrios' son, José María, places less emphasis on the brutal side of his father's justice. He believes that much of Barrios' reputation was manufactured in order to intimidate, and that the idea that petty criminals were routinely hung is false. José María argues that if the ultimate aim were to pacify and control, it could not be achieved over such a vast area by the use of repression alone.

56 Interview with anonymous informant, 27 Sept. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.

57 AMZ'n, Caja 15, exp. 19, Gobernación.

On 31 Jan. 1921 the municipal president of Zacatlán informed the Justice of the Peace in Jicolapa that the *jefe de armas* would send men to the *barrio* during the days of the fiesta. The men were to be accommodated in the local school for girls and a telephone office linking them to Zacatlán headquarters would be set up.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Correspondence for March 1923.

On 22 Feb. 1923 Bardomiano Barrios issued orders to the *jefe de armas* in Jopala to counter the nuisance being made by men who were firing their guns into the air.

AML, Legajo de oficios - Varios, no. 5. (1929), Seguridad Pública, no. 686.

On 16 Oct. 1929 the provisional municipal president of Tepeyahualco, Libres sent a report to the Agente del Ministerio Público in Libres informing of the arrest of two inebriated men by the *jefe de armas*. It was added that the men were a public nuisance and the *jefe* was acting in the interests of the community.

58 AMC, Caja 167, Gobernación 47.

On 16 March 1929 the municipal president of Cuetzalan sent Captain Manuel Cabrera, *jefe de armas* of Cuetzalan, '450 boletos del cobro de donativo' in relation to unpaid

contributions towards public instruction in the past year. The *jefe* was asked to collect the outstanding money as the ayuntamiento lacked the necessary personnel to do the job itself.

<sup>59</sup> Humour might seem misplaced when referring to Barrios' repressive methods, yet a frequently recalled anecdote is given to create a more accurate impression of the ambiguous feelings of serranos towards Barrios' period of influence:

The story concerns the son of a wealthy businessman in Zacatlán who, after several drinks, thought it would be a good idea to ride around the central plaza on horseback, bearing his backside to the populace. After having performed his stunt, Barrios' men promptly threw him in jail and, after sobering up, the youth was brought before Barrios. Barrios allegedly congratulated him for his horsemanship before informing him that he would have to pay a \$50 fine. The youth pulled a \$100 bill from his wallet and enquired if Barrios had change. Barrios is reported to have said that he had no change, but the youth was at liberty to repeat his stunt for the extra \$50 if he so desired.

<sup>60</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Telegrammes received August 1923.

On 25 Aug. 1923 General Almazán ordered Barrios to relieve Leandro Alvarez of his command of troops in Zautla. The order was issued in response to Alvarez's history of undisciplined behaviour. Two days later, Barrios confirmed to Almazán that the order had been carried out.

<sup>61</sup> AGN. O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 3.

See letter dated 1 Sept. 1926 from Francisco Heredia to President Calles' private secretary, Torreblanco.

<sup>62</sup> Palacios, E.J., *Puebla. Su territorio y sus habitantes*, (Mexico, 1917), pp. 253-56.

<sup>63</sup> Saenz, *Escuelas Federales*.

<sup>64</sup> AMZ'n, Caja 2, Justicia, exp. 8, 188.

<sup>65</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Letters sent/received April-June 1923.

Letter dated 10 April 1923.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Letters sent March 1928.

On 22 March 1928 Demetrio Barrios sent a letter of introduction with Alfonso Lobato, informing the auxiliary municipal president of Tepeixco that Lobato was to become the community's secretary.

<sup>66</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Letters received March 1928.

On 29 March 1928 Arturo A. Sosa of Tlacuilotepec, referred Demetrio Barrios to the rumour that the secretary of Naupan was being considered for replacement due to his lack of ability. Sosa wondered if the position could be given to his father, and assured Barrios that his father would always work in harmony with Barrios' wishes and would be a useful asset in reorganising affairs in Naupan.

<sup>67</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letters received August 1926.

Letter sent 15 Aug. 1926 from J. Meza y Mora in Papantla to Demetrio Barrios in Zacatlán.

<sup>68</sup> One informant suggested that his father had considered Gabriel Barrios the only person able to resolve a land dispute that he had with a powerful neighbour. Upon hearing the complaint, Barrios allegedly gave the plaintiff a gun, told him he was now a *jefe de armas*, and that if his neighbour persisted, the plaintiff had Barrios' authority to shoot him.

<sup>69</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Reports January 1925.

On 14 Jan. 1925 the vecinos of Chicontla asked the municipal president of Jopala to appeal to Demetrio Barrios to stop the corruption of the secretary and to order him to return money obtained through extortion.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Letters sent/received January 1928.

Three years later, the vecinos of Jopala appeared to have experienced their own problems, requesting Barrios to remove their corrupt secretary.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929. Letters sent/received January 1929.

The follow year, the people of Jopala were still appealing for a remedy despite an investigation by Barrios.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929. Official correspondence April 1929.

On 8 April 1929 the president of the auxiliary council of Concepción, Atlequizayan, asked Demetrio Barrios to remove the secretary, Agustín Segura, who had demanded increasingly excessive wages while doing very little to satisfy the duties of his position during his seven years as secretary.

70 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters sent/received November 1925.

71 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letters received December 1926.  
Letter sent on 2 Dec. 1926.

72 ADN, C, 2-1145, tomo 2, ff. 467-68.

73 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters received June 1925.

Letter dated 22 June 1925 from Marcos Colombus Jr. of Caxhuacán to Demetrio Barrios.

74 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Letters sent/received May 1928.

See letter dated 15 May 1928 from Uribe, and Barrios' reply dated 31 May 1928.

75 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1927. Letters received July/August 1927.

76 Redfield, R., *Tepoztlán. A Mexican Village*, (Chicago, 1930), pp. 66-68.

77 AMT de O, Caja 18, exp. 43, Hacienda.

78 AMT de O, Caja 51, Fomento, no. 106.  
See correspondence for 3 Feb. 1926.

AMT de O, Caja 20, exp. 30, Fomento, dated 24 Sept. 1919.

The actual daily earnings of serranos during this period are hard to quantify. In answer to a 1919 government questionnaire, the ayuntamiento in Tetela estimated that campesinos earned anything from \$0.62 to \$1.50 a day.

AMT de O, Caja 50, Folleto no. 6, Sec. de Acción Agraria del PNR.

In 1934, a federal government leaflet advised the ayuntamiento that the minimum daily wage for a campesino in the State of Puebla was \$1.00.

79 AMC, Caja 137, exp. 2, Gobernación, 104.

A report dated 31 Aug. 1918 by the retiring municipal president of Cuetzalan stated that the roads remained in a bad state of repair because the political disturbances had made it impossible to organise the *faenas* necessary to carry out remedial work.

80 AMZ'n, Caja 1, 3, 327, Justicia.

On 24 Aug. 1919 the municipal president of Zacatlán confirmed the position of the Juez de Paz in Jilotzingo, and instructed him to continue his responsibilities regarding the organisation and completion of *faena* duties in his community.

AMZ'n, Caja 5, 38, 836, Gobernación.

On 20 June 1920 the municipal president of Zacatlán wrote to the Juez de Paz for the *barrio* of Tlatenpa drawing his attention to a recent landslip which had blocked the Zacatlán - Ahuacatlán road. He ordered the judge to ask for voluntary labour to clear the obstruction immediately, failing which, the judge should organise a *faena* to rectify the problem.

81 AMT de O, Caja 44, Fomento Circular no. 8.

A state government circular dated 23 Feb. 1920 drew attention to the reluctance of several local authorities in the municipality of Tlatlauquitepec to co-operate in the construction of roads and tracks. They were given two weeks to resolve the situation and report back to the governor.



AMT de O, Caja 26, exp. 7, Gobernación.

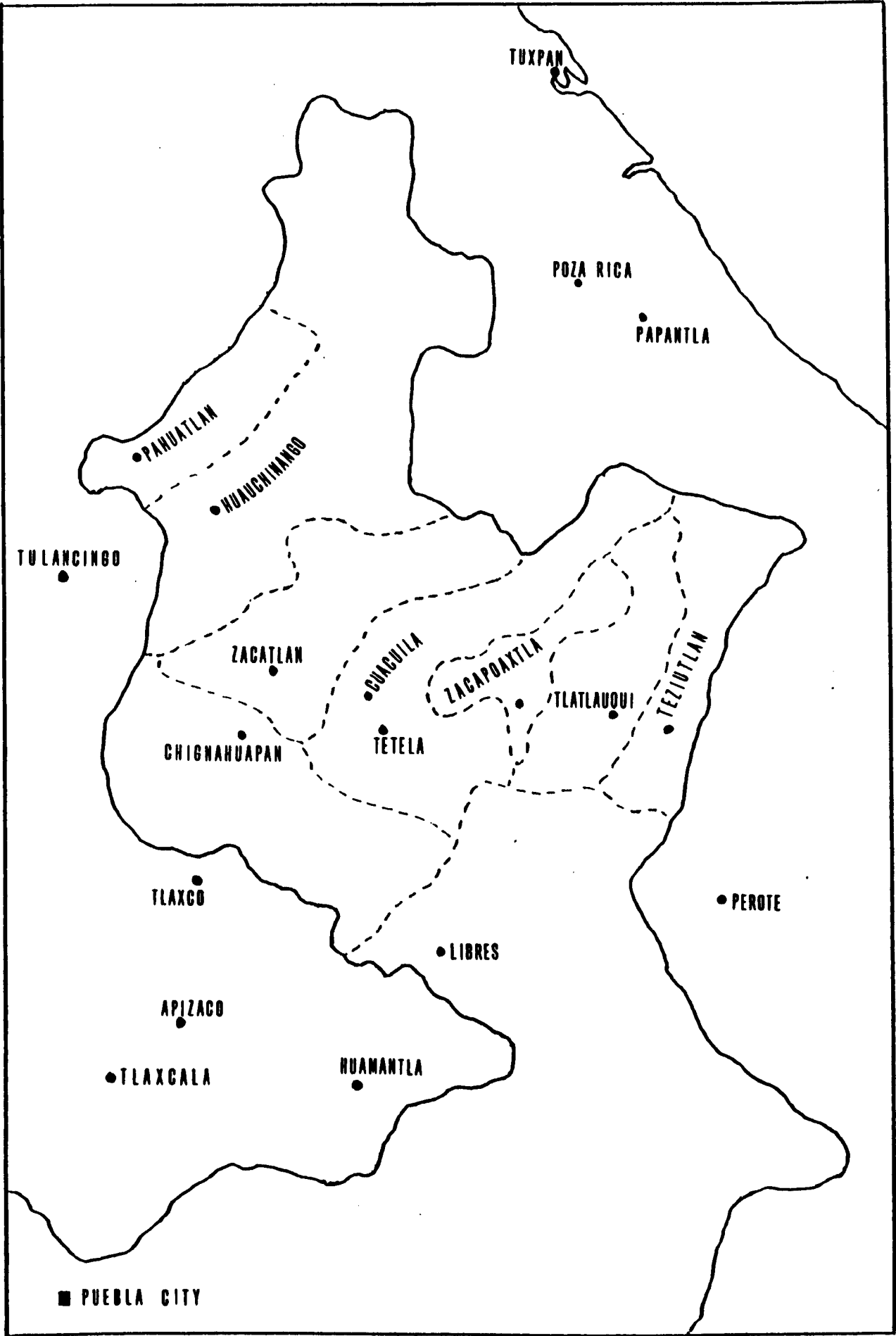
On 27 Feb. 1920, in reply to a letter from the municipal president of Tetela de Ocampo which reported the refusal of vecinos in Huitzilan to co-operate with the construction of a nearby path, the state government reminded the municipal president of his duty to stress the importance of such projects to the people of Huitzilan. The state government also stated that, in the absence of state funding, the vecinos should give their voluntary labour towards projects from which they would directly benefit.

82 AMZ'x, Fomento, 58, 1.

On 26 Dec. 1919 Barrios wrote to the municipal president of Zacapoaxtla saying that his military operations in the area were being hampered by the poor state of the paths and telephone links. He asked the municipal president to issue instructions for repair work to be carried out.

83 AMZ'x, Fomento, 18, (1923).

On 25 May 1922 the municipal president of Cuetzalan, Victor Bernal, expressed the willingness of the vecinos to comply with *faena* duties, but that they very much resented the presence of armed men to guard them as they were guilty of no crime.



SIERRA DE PUEBLA — ELECTORAL CONSTITUENCIES DURING 1920S

#### 4. Power and Politics in the Sierra:

##### Broader implications

Although military factions periodically challenged the Sonorenses during the 1920s, the cessation of more widespread violence and the military support lent to the Sonorenses by regional caudillos heralded a period of relative stability in federal politics. Such stability, however, eluded the state of Puebla. Following the fall of the Carrancista governor, Alfonso Cabrera, in May 1920, the governorship changed hands no less than fifteen times in eight years, highlighting the inability of either state or federal powers to control the diverse local interests. In conservative Puebla City, it would take some years for lingering Carrancismo to fade into obscurity. Meanwhile, Puebla's agrarian leaders fought to retain a share of the political power against a fast-emerging *laborista* movement.

The differing political sympathies of Obregón, Calles and De la Huerta further complicated federal government initiatives to impose its authority on Puebla politics. Combined with the changing fortunes and divisions between local political factions, a stalemate was reached: federal government had no influential representative in Puebla to implement its policies, yet nor could the various political factions in local government unite sufficiently to sustain a credible defence of state autonomy against federal subjugation. Consequently, *poblano* politics drifted in a state of limbo, temporarily affected but rarely controlled by the latest political initiative. Within a state where political initiatives were as short-lived as the occupancy of the governor's seat, the Barrios cacicazgo in the Sierra provided a conspicuous example of stability.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1920s, agrarian caudillos on the plains of Puebla drifted in and out of political prominence: the Barrios family represented a pillar of strength and

stability that proved more resistant. Only when a tidal-wave of federal change broke over Puebla during the final years of the decade, was Gabriel Barrios swept aside in the way of many before him. This chapter addresses the manner in which Barrios was able to retain a position of political significance while remaining sufficiently aloof to avoid becoming a casualty of constant change. Although his military position theoretically denied him the chance of participating in political developments, his role as cacique made political involvement imperative. Attention is given to how Barrios maintained this delicate balance: how he reassured his military superiors that he was first and foremost a loyal federal officer yet was able, simultaneously, to establish a political dimension to his cacicazgo that reached both the state and national spheres.

To establish such links was a considerable achievement, yet to maintain such contacts while the political convictions of so many others became liabilities, suggests that Barrios was either apolitical and without principles. The Revolution had propelled many local leaders from obscurity to public prominence. Many, like Barrios, had risen due to their ability to harness and direct the energies of their fellow campesinos into battle. Some, such as Zapata, Villa and Cedillo, achieved national attention: whereas Primo Tapia in Michoacán, Manuel Montes and José María Sánchez in Puebla, made their presence felt on a more regional level. All rose to power by leading campesino armies in an agrarian crusade, an agrarianism that would leave them stranded when federal policies pulled away from such radical reform. Very few of these revolutionary leaders retained their power; many lost their lives as well as their influence.

Barrios was different. As discussed in chapter two, the historical peculiarities of the Sierra de Puebla provided Barrios with the means to attract a

popular military backing without him having to adopt a populist political position. Although he led a campesino army, Barrios was far from an agrarian. Yet neither were his years as a Carrancista an attempt to lead the Sierra back to a former isolation that might shield it from revolutionary change. The result of his initiatives in the Sierra provided the Revolution with a practical working model at a time when reform remained little more than political rhetoric. Yet this reveals the ambiguity within the man and, perhaps, within the region. Revolutionary theory was frequently turned into practice in the Sierra by means of forced labour: communication improvements that might emancipate the campesino from exploitation were constructed by the use of a system of labour which relied upon the traditional subservience of the weak. This raises questions regarding Barrios' ideological stance. Indeed, did Barrios have any guiding principles or was he merely an opportunist adept at utilising each political change to his own advantage? This chapter seeks to understand the connection between the man and the wider political system; the local and the national. An analysis of the relationships between the rural cacique and the politicians and city intellectuals will ascertain if any consistency underscored Barrios' actions; it will investigate how Barrios dealt with the political challenges that threatened his control of the Sierra, and why, after having survived many turbulent years, Barrios eventually fell from grace.

### *Puebla State politics in the 1920s*

In his inimitable style, Gruening summarised the malaise that beset Puebla politics during the 1920s:

Since 1920 but for a brief interlude - the administration of the young intellectual Lombardo Toledano - the governorship has been going from worse to still worse: General José María Sánchez, 'author' of the attempted assassination of Morones in the chamber of deputies in November 1924, in which affray an innocent bystander of a deputy was killed; Froylán Manjarrez, who after looting the state joined the de la Huerta rebellion in search of still more loot; Alberto Guerrero, a drunkard; Claudio N. Tirado, who stole at least a million pesos by the simple device of paying no-one and keeping the state revenues, seeking immortality by cutting his name on every new stone erected in the state during his term; and General Manuel P. Montes, the agrarian agitator.<sup>2</sup>

Gruening's 'roll of dishonour' offers little evidence that the leaders of the state government in Puebla possessed the necessary qualities to convey the region from bloody civil war to sustained reconstruction. As in many other states, Puebla governments of the 1920s formed a battleground upon which local factions and federal authorities vied for political control. Puebla proved particularly prone to federal intervention. Its proximity to the national seat of power, the incident of rebellion occurring within, or adjacent to its state borders and its internal political instability frequently persuaded federal government to use its powers under the Constitution. (Appendix III) Given the high incident of armed conflict within the state of Puebla, any federal administration that judged Puebla to have lost local constitutional order could invoke article 76 of the Constitution and impose its own provisional governor. This federal appointee would remain in place until stability had been restored and elections could take place to reinstate democracy under the terms of the local Constitution.

Following the flight of the Carrancista government of Governor Alfonso Cabrera and the subsequent death of Carranza in May 1920, the federal government used its powers to impose a series of provisional governors upon the

Puebla people. In July 1920, Luis Sánchez Pontón eventually assumed the task of steering the state towards constitutional elections later in the year.<sup>3</sup> The federal government's choice of Sánchez Pontón, a former Carrancista, may indicate federal uncertainty regarding local reactions to the death of Carranza. The subsequent election became a straight contest between two extremes: the many surviving Carrancistas rallied around Sánchez Pontón's favourite, Rafael Lara Grijales backed by the *Partido Liberal Constitucionalista*; while Obregón barely disguised his preference for the populist agrarian caudillo, José María Sánchez.<sup>4</sup> Continuing federal anxiety about the strength of their support was demonstrated by the nullification of the election results, thus avoiding any possibility of a Carrancista victory. Claudio N. Tirado was installed as interim governor until June 1921 when the time was judged propitious for the federal congress to declare Sánchez the electoral victor and constitutional governor of Puebla with a four year mandate.

Obregón's judgement of how far Puebla's politicians could be pushed proved lacking. As it became evident that Sánchez was intent on unleashing a radical agrarian agenda on his fellow *poblanos*, those groups who judged such reforms to threaten their interests voiced their objections through the state congress: a majority of local deputies transferred congressional proceedings to the town of San Marcos and withdrew their recognition of Sánchez's executive powers. Social and political divisions within Puebla once again threatened to draw the region into violent conflict. In March 1922 the federal congress moved to impose Froylán C. Manjarrez as governor in order to diffuse the growing tension.<sup>5</sup>

In the event, the choice of a De la Huerta supporter as governor only compounded the problem: far from providing the basis for peace, the appointment of Manjarrez exported federal political disunity into a state that

already had enough of its own. The political fortunes of Manjarrez were inextricably linked to those of De la Huerta. When it became apparent that De la Huerta was being passed over for the presidency, Manjarrez showed little hesitation in pledging his support for De la Huerta in the subsequent rebellion. While the pre-emptive strike by the federal military commander, General Juan Andréu Almazán, prevented Manjarrez from converting the state capital into a Delahuerta stronghold, federal control of military affairs proved to be as fragile as its grip on Puebla politics. Despite Almazán's move, within the first turbulent days of December 1923 the governorship of Puebla passed from federal to rebel and back to federal hands as the fortunes of Almazán and rebel general, Fortunato Maycotte, moved first one way and then the other.<sup>6</sup>

With Puebla City secured, the federal government reinstated its interim governor, Vicente Lombardo Toledano. Toledano retained the post for six months, while the Delahuerta threat to the region was virtually extinguished. However, the situation in Puebla was far from settled. Toledano's inability to govern a state in conflict prompted the federal government to replace him with Alberto Guerrero in June 1924 until a elected governor could resume powers at the beginning of 1925.

The ease with which Calles eventually swept to power as president of the Republic was not mirrored in the Puebla gubernatorial elections. Of three candidates in contention, Luis Sánchez de Cima, Lauro Camarillo and Claudio N. Tirado, victory was claimed by the latter two; it was left to the federal government eventually to accept the credentials of the Tirado administration.

The losing candidates represented two increasingly polarised sectors of Puebla politics: Camarillo's support was manufactured from a rising *laborista* movement, while Sánchez de Cima's strength was rooted in *agrarismo*. While



Tirado strained to contain these extremes his reforms were being influenced by political events in Mexico City. Calles' own attempts to rein in the wayward, less predictable elements of *agrarismo* were reflected in measures taken by Tirado to regulate and decelerate the process of agrarian reform. However, the continued weakness of federal authority in Puebla was demonstrated by the fact that Tirado's initiatives became marginalised by a more vociferous local battle in state congress between *laboristas* and *agraristas*. Each side fought the other to a standstill, making it almost impossible for any structured reform measures to pass through congress. Politically isolated, Tirado became an easier target for his many political opponents. When ex-governor Toledano went before the federal congress accusing Tirado of unconstitutional actions, the federal judiciary upheld his claims and in November 1926, Tirado's removal as governor was proposed and accepted.

Tirado's fall from grace produced an unexpected appointment: federal government appeared to revive the flagging state of Puebla's *agrarismo* by naming Manuel Montes as provisional governor.<sup>7</sup> Rogelio Sánchez López examines various possible motives for the appointment of an agrarian leader to the governorship of a state where *agrarismo* was being trounced by *laborista* political interests.<sup>8</sup> He suggests that in choosing Montes, Calles may have recognised the fact that the agrarian caudillo enjoyed a level of prestige within the state of Puebla that Calles' local supporters would have found hard to combat. This being the case, Calles may have been prepared to expose the limited agenda and experience of the *agraristas* by allowing them to fail at governing the state. In addition, although Montes was linked to the *veracruzano* agrarian movement that gave rise to the formation of the *Liga Nacional Campesina*, Calles may have perceived him as less committed to the organisation than other possible gubernatorial contenders, such as Crisóforo Ibañez who had frequently defended the *Liga's* position.

A further point might be added to the motives for choosing Montes. In July 1926 Calles began to promulgate reforms designed to limit further the power of the Catholic Church. Montes' appointment as governor coincided with the first sustained outbreak of violent opposition to these reforms by groups loyal to the Church. Given the instability already caused by Obregón's intention to seek re-election, and the uncertain reaction of regional caudillos to political and religious issues, Calles may have chosen Montes as a military precaution. By favouring Montes, Calles might gain the support of his agrarian army if the need arose, rather than risk make an enemy who might lend strength to any Church-led rebellion.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever the motives for placing Montes as governor, hindsight strengthens Sánchez López's thesis. Montes did not display an ability to extend beyond his limited agrarian agenda. Indeed, had he possessed such qualities it is highly unlikely that an increasingly *laborista* local government would have allowed the agrarian governor the freedom to pursue his policies. By July 1927, with the Cristero rebellion largely contained and the state government in turmoil, the federal government once again intervened and replaced Montes with General Bravo Izquierdo. Bravo Izquierdo retained the post until Leonides Andréu Almazán was elected governor in November 1928. It was under Almazán's governorship that the Calles-led federal government declared war on military caciquismo. In Leonides Andréu Almazán, federal government found a governor willing to join forces in the battle to rid Puebla of the local versions of what Calles viewed as a national malaise. Barrios' days as military leader of the Sierra de Puebla were numbered.

*Barrios as Carrancista, Barrios as Obregonista*

Although Barrios never held a civilian post, the nature of his rule and development projects ensured that he became the focus of attention for those with political aspirations in the Sierra.<sup>10</sup> Those serranos with political ambitions were faced with two options: either to associate with the cacique and ride towards political influence on his coat-tails; or to oppose him, denounce him as a cacique and criticise the brutal methods he employed to achieve his objectives. Few could afford to ignore the soldier who appeared to shun the political arena.

As with many other military leaders of the Revolution, Barrios' first delicate political manoeuvre was to extricate himself from his position as a faithful Carrancista officer and present himself as a dependable supporter of the new regime. As discussed in chapter two, the dilemma was made all the more acute by the inopportune arrival of the Carranza party on his doorstep. In hindsight, Barrios' stance of neutrality, perhaps more accurately described as a stance of invisibility, helped to secure his future as an Obregonista. As a result of the successful tying up of loose ends in Tlaxcalantongo, Barrios' involuntary part in the drama portrayed him as a significant character in the last phase of the Aguaprietistas' road to supremacy.

Barrios' move towards Obregón could be viewed either as the logical action of a patriot or an unprincipled opportunist. Yet the complexity of his political dilemma was considerably deepened by the personal ties which had linked him to the Carrancista cause. As Barrios rose to military prominence in the western Sierra, so his prestige in Zacatlán grew. He began to buy property; indeed, one of the Barrios residences subsequently became the headquarters of the 46th. Battalion. The adjacent block to the headquarters was owned by the Cabrera Lobato family, the most prestigious family in Zacatlán. Ties between

the two families went beyond neighbourliness as Luis Cabrera and Gabriel Barrios were personally bound by compadrazgo.<sup>11</sup> With Luis Cabrera having been Carranza's right hand man since 1914, and his brother, Alfonso, occupying the state governorship, from the very beginning of his rise to regional power Gabriel Barrios enjoyed personal links with officials in the highest positions in both federal and state governments. While Carranza remained in power, these connections helped provide the necessary arms and funds for Barrios to establish the foundations of a formidable military power base in the Sierra.

Conversely, when Carranza fell, such close ties with the previous regime were a liability. Whether Barrios could ever truly abandon the Carrancista cause stimulated considerable speculation. Indeed, if one should believe newspaper reports, on 3 May 1920 *El Monitor* reported the withdrawal of Alfonso Cabrera's state government to Zacatlán, where it was said to be enjoying the protection of Barrios' men.<sup>12</sup> A week later, the *Universal de Puebla* alleged that Carranza himself was receiving Barrios' protection in the Sierra and that the federal administration had supplied the Brigada Serrana with 'large quantities of arms and ammunition that had been deposited in the Sierra'.<sup>13</sup> Even after it became clear that Barrios had sworn allegiance to the Obregón administration, suspicion concerning Barrios' true political affiliation remained. During the nervous months that preceded Sánchez Pontón's governorship, speculation focussed upon the possibility of a Cabrera-led rebellion in the Sierra, with Barrios providing the military backing.

Given such uncertainty, it is all the more curious that Obregón was willing to trust Barrios and allow him not only to retain his troops but also to remain on his home ground. Certainly, to harness Barrios' knowledge of the Sierra, its geography and people would have been a considerable coup for Obregón. Equally, as suggested by Obregón's military investigator, General

Viqueras, these same qualities represented a considerable threat. Yet if Barrios were to make a stand, surely the most logical time to do so was when Carranza sought his protection. If it was not propitious to defend Carranza then, surely the situation would have less favourable after Carranza's death.

Barrios may have benefited from the pervading uncertainty of the times. A strong motive for naming Sánchez Pontón, a former Carrancista, as governor was to diffuse Carrancista emotions rather than to represent Obregón's policies. So too Barrios may have been chosen to command the Sierra military zone because the federal government could not foresee how Barrios and his fellow serranos might react if he received orders to disband or withdraw from the region. Any violent reaction from Barrios in the Sierra would have been greeted positively by Carrancista sympathisers in Puebla City who were predicting and waiting for such a move. Conversely, Barrios' public statements had contained nothing to suggest to Obregón that his intentions were anything other than to lead the Sierra towards a peaceful, progressive future. Obregón had a choice between possible stability and the threat of rebellion. An inescapable fact of revolutionary life continued to have relevance beyond the death of Carranza: military power was inseparable from political might.

### ***Barrios fortifies his cacicazgo***

Barrios' political significance went beyond purely military considerations. The attack against the Márquez brothers in 1917 had eliminated their stake in any political debate in the western Sierra. The only surviving civilian political interests in the Zacatlán/Tetela area during the Carrancista years belonged to those individuals who were in former times incorporated into the Lucas cacicazgo. Both Demetrio Santa Fe and Ricardo Márquez Galindo

had been faithful supporters of Lucas, and both purveyed the brand of liberal ideology for which the Sierra had become famous.

Upon Lucas' death his son, Abraham, chose to resume a political rather than military career, and together with Santa Fe and Márquez Galindo, worked closely with Barrios as a representative of the local *Partido Liberal*.<sup>14</sup> In the election campaign following Carranza's death, Lucas and Santa Fe were elected as state deputy and *suplente* for Tetela respectively, for the *Partido Liberal Independiente* which had officially backed the candidacy of José María Sánchez for governor. The party published a programme that stressed loyalty to the federal government, a desire to promote regional peace and stability and to encourage economic and educational developments within the Sierra.<sup>15</sup>

The links between Barrios' political friends, the *Partido Liberal*, and the party's backing for the candidacy of José María Sánchez for governor, suggest that Barrios acknowledged the realities of political life. The *Partido Liberal's* policies might have corresponded closely to Barrios' vision for the Sierra but there is no evidence at this early stage in the cacicazgo that Barrios' political interests extended beyond his personal affinity to certain members of the Party. Equally, it is hard to believe that Barrios was enthusiastic in the Party's endorsement of the candidacy of Sánchez. Certainly, Obregón's candidate, Sánchez, an agrarian caudillo from the *llanos*, held little political relevance to the Sierra, an area free from significant agrarian conflict. There is no evidence to suggest that political support for Sánchez was anything more than pragmatic: Sánchez and Barrios did not even enjoy any formal dialogue until some months after Sánchez's election.<sup>16</sup> In recognising Sánchez, Barrios and the Sierra Liberals were not supporting *agrarismo*, rather they were indicating their acceptance of Obregón's authority as legitimate leader of the Revolution.

Barrios' constant denials of involvement in suspected plots against the federal government appear to be vindicated by his political alignment. Had Barrios retained any ideas of reviving Carranza sympathies in the Sierra, one would have expected evidence of such a stance through closer political ties with Sánchez Pontón and his candidate for the governorship, Lara Grajales.<sup>17</sup> Yet in all his actions Barrios demonstrated a loyalty to the federation; an association which confirms his pragmatism and opportunism. It should be remembered that Barrios' military career hung in the balance, and following recommendations made by Brigadier General Viqueras the prospects looked decidedly bleak. It was at this delicate moment that Barrios issued personal denials of the newspaper articles that claimed links between himself and a suspected Cabrera-led plot. This was also the time when Barrios offered Obregón a reduction of his forces in order to 'save money for the nation'. Within weeks of making this offer, Barrios' political friends in the Sierra swore allegiance to the federal government and endorsed its choice of governor. A month later, Barrios received confirmation of Obregón's decision to keep him in charge of military operations in the Sierra and was promoted to the rank of brigadier general.<sup>18</sup> The astuteness for which Barrios is commonly remembered was already well developed during the early days of his cacicazgo.

While the Ministry of War was sufficiently convinced of Barrios' loyalty, not all observers believed that Barrios could completely abandon a Carrancista cause that had become so closely identified with his compadres, the Cabrera brothers. Despite Ministry of War assurances, newspaper reports continued to speculate that Barrios was on the verge of rebellion.<sup>19</sup> Rather than indicating Barrios' importance in determining national political events, these doubts more accurately reflected the tension borne from political instability that pervaded Puebla City. In more concrete terms, this uncertainty was manifest in the decision to transfer the state congress to the town of San Marcos and the

subsequent refusal of many local deputies to recognise José María Sánchez as governor.

Among those who opposed Sánchez's *agrarismo*, there were many who watched in vain for Barrios to make a move in the Sierra.<sup>20</sup> While they may have been encouraged by speculation that the former Carrancista commander, General Antonio Medina, was poised to rebel in Zacapoaxtla in an attempt to arouse the sympathies of other ex-Carrancistas, there is little to suggest that Barrios could be counted among their number. Medina, having failed in political campaigns, may have felt that he risked little by opposing those in power. Unlike his former military commander, however, Barrios had not only been able skilfully to make the transition from Carrancista to Obregonista, but had also risen to control much of the Sierra with a mandate that Medina must have envied.

Barrios had everything to lose from rebelling against local and federal politicians. He could only gain from capitalising on his confirmed position as head of military operations in the Sierra. It was now that Barrios began to establish the structure for a cacicazgo that would endure for a decade. Many of Barrios' *jefes de armas* were recruited during this period, while the Barrios family's hold on municipal politics grew tighter through the expanding network of reciprocal arrangements with local officials. It was also a time when Barrios began to develop his political connections beyond the Sierra by projecting his image as the promoter of revolutionary progress. When Barrios appealed to Calles for federal help in the economic reconstruction of the Sierra, he struck a chord that reverberated beyond those in the Ministry of War who might appreciate the strategic considerations of such improvements. Barrios' approach appealed to a wide range of politicians and intellectuals who had talked of revolutionary change, but lacked the finance and the social stability to fulfil their



dreams. Barrios offered a practical example of the Revolution at work; reform that could bring, in theory at least, the benefits of the Revolution to all serranos irrespective of colour or creed.<sup>21</sup>

### *Enemies from within: Political opposition in the Sierra*

Just as rebels such as Salvador Vega Bernal continued to be a thorn in the side of Barrios' military supremacy of the Sierra, so opponents mounted a spirited challenge to his increasing influence in regional politics. The most immediate opposition came from the region which the cacicazgo would later consider to be its home territory. Following the death of Juan Francisco Lucas, rivalry between Barrios and Tranquilino Quintero, the mestizo officer from Cuautempan, polarised into a struggle for overall command of the Brigada Serrana. Quintero never did recover from the Ministry of War's preference for Barrios as commander and, following a short spell in charge of Carrancista troops in Teziutlán, he announced his resignation and intention to follow a political career.

In June 1922 Quintero ran as the *Club Independiente "Ignacio Zaragoza"* candidate for deputy in Tetela. Days later the same club accused Barrios of interfering in political affairs to the detriment of opposition candidates.<sup>22</sup> Quintero was supported by an influential ally, Miguel Lucas, son of Juan Francisco. The Lucas brothers obviously perceived the events that followed their father's death very differently. Neither was chosen to inherit their father's military position, and while Abraham not only accepted the situation but gave his political backing to Barrios, Miguel's opposition took the form of lending his support to Quintero's military and political ambitions. Ultimately, however, the only serious threat to Barrios' rising supremacy in the western Sierra ended with

Quintero's death at the hands of Delahuertistas in March 1924.<sup>23</sup> Miguel Lucas never again overtly displayed his personal objections to Barrios' rise to power.

Barrios' ambitions, however, stretched beyond the horizons of Tetela and Zacatlán. Expansion of the cacicazgo into less familiar territories inevitably produced new challenges, and nowhere was this stronger than in the eastern Sierra district of Zacapoaxtla. Little is known of the social and economic background of Claudio Nabor Tirado, but by 1920 he had obtained sufficient prestige in the district to become its federal deputy, the most prominent political representative of a Zacapoaxtla faction led by the brothers, Wenceslao and Ignacio Macip and their close ally, Rufino A. Landero. At the most local level, opposing sides in the ensuing struggle fell into pre-existing bitter divisions between families and communities. (The details of this conflict forms the subject material for the case study considered in chapter six.) On a broader level, however, these factions were skirmishes in a clash of giants. The expansion of Barrios' cacicazgo into the region previously controlled by Tirado began a power struggle which had regional and national repercussions.

Referring to the July 1922 electoral campaign, Tirado sent a letter to the *Jefe de Operaciones Militares*, Puebla, citing a number of instances in which he alleged that Barrios and his men had intimidated his political supporters. He went on to underline the detrimental effects of Barrios' presence in the Sierra:

Relating to my political tour of the Central and Southern regions of the State, I cannot find sufficient words to praise the conduct of the forces commanded by General Elizondo. Unfortunately the same can not be said of the North. Here, I felt as though I were entering enemy territory in which neither the authority of the President of the Republic nor the State governor were recognised. In their place, one finds 'Gabriel No.1', the 'señor of Cuacuila' as he is commonly known within the region. In voting for candidates of the Cooperatistas, who oppose Barrios, the serranos have demonstrated their opposition to his tyranny.

My purpose for drawing this affair to your attention is purely to satisfy my duty to report such irregularities. At the same time I take the opportunity of repeating my request to afford the people of the Sierra the guarantees that they presently lack. This can only be achieved by the replacement of Barrios troops with more honourable federal forces. Barrios' irregular army constitutes nothing less than an armed political party that, by its very nature, gives it an unfair advantage over all those political parties in opposition to their policies.<sup>24</sup>

In a dismissive reply, Barrios suggested to the *Jefatura* that Tirado's charges were completely false and were motivated by his desire to acquire total political domination of the region. Barrios challenged Tirado to name a single victim of alleged abuses, and in declaring himself to be free from political ambitions invited the Ministry of War to send a commission to the Sierra to ascertain the true nature of the situation.<sup>25</sup>

This depth of tension between Barrios and Tirado contradicts previously held views that the two men sustained a considerable measure of co-operation during this period.<sup>26</sup> That a true rivalry did indeed exist is made clear from the findings of a Ministry of War investigation in May 1923 which addressed the allegations made by Tirado and others.<sup>27</sup> After extensive enquiries, the military commission found no substantial evidence to support the complaints lodged by the plaintiffs. In his conclusion, General Almazán drew specific attention to the labours of the main accusers, deputies González and Macip;

[...] who had tried particularly hard to collect every account and rumour they could find in order to criticise Barrios (even those of co-madres). Hearsay was presented as firm evidence without any investigation of the origins or the validity of the claims.<sup>28</sup>

In a more detailed section of the report that investigated claims lodged by deputy Macip and Rufino Landero, the municipal president of Zacapoaxtla, Almazán concluded that none of the charges could be proved. They were based, he observed, on a local factional dispute in which Barrios was seen to support a

group who dared to challenge the 'political hegemony' enjoyed in Zacapoaxtla by the Macip family and their patron, senator Claudio N. Tirado.<sup>29</sup>

If Almazán's assessment is accurate, it is not plausible that only a year after this enquiry, Macip and Landero could be construed as Barrios' representatives in Congress helping to support Tirado's governorship.<sup>30</sup> This scenario becomes more dubious when one considers the evidence of a bitter dispute between Tirado and Barrios only months after the former's appointment as governor. In July 1925 Barrios' allies in the Tirado stronghold of Zacapoaxtla began sending petitions to the president reporting the destructive tactics employed by their political enemies in Zacapoaxtla 'who now occupy positions of authority in the state government and are using their power to interrupt the road construction project'.<sup>31</sup>

The continuing friction between the two men reached new heights in August 1925 when Tirado used his executive powers to replace the ayuntamiento of Cuetzalan. Tirado stated that the previous municipal president, Felipe Ortiz, had fraudulently taken possession of the ayuntamiento with the help of José María Flores, the local cacique, and Gabriel Barrios. Ortiz, for his part, had earlier appealed against Tirado's attempts to replace him, alleging that as sanchistas had come to power in the state capital, they were seeking revenge on those who had previously opposed them.<sup>32</sup>

Certainly, Flores was fully committed to impeding Tirado's efforts to retain his grip on the region. In a letter to Demetrio Barrios in August 1925, Flores relayed details of the attacks he and his friends had been launching against Tirado in the federal congress. Flores added that a short-list of candidates to replace Tirado had already been drawn up, only to be delayed by a disagreement between the president and [Gilberto] Valenzuela.<sup>33</sup> In the

following months Flores and Ricardo Márquez Galindo continually lobbied the president and federal government in order to provoke a favourable response regarding the dispute with Tirado.<sup>34</sup>

In August 1926 with Governor Tirado fighting for his political life and Barrios proving to be a dangerous enemy, Tirado unleashed one final assault. Tirado forwarded to Calles a list of seventeen incidents in which he claimed that there was proof of abuses by Barrios against serranos. Tirado accused Barrios and his forces of issuing death threats to less compliant local officials and of being 'in open rebellion against the State government'. He concluded that since the Sierra de Puebla, from Teziutlán to Huauchinango, was under the military control of Barrios, the entire region was in danger of following the example of Cuetzalan, Zacatlán and Ahuacatlán by turning against the state government.<sup>35</sup>

So extreme were the accusations made against Barrios, that Calles ordered an immediate investigation which was conducted by Francisco Heredia only a week later. Heredia's report was a damning corroboration of Tirado's charges. While some cases were unproved, in relation to the more serious charges of violent intimidation of local officials in Zacatlán and Cuetzalan, Heredia confirmed that Barrios' men had encouraged a political battle between 'groups of armed Indians' (obviously referring to the *cuerpos voluntarios*) and groups loyal to the state government. The report concluded:

It is logical to suppose that, in common with many towns in the Republic, the incidents investigated originate from the ambitions of different groups within each community who are trying to gain control of political and administrative affairs; one formed by the authorities that are in harmony with the state government, and the other comprising those loyal to General Gabriel Barrios. This individual, due to being a native serrano, his military rank and the forces that he has at his command, exercises a singular influence throughout the Sierra, and it follows that his friends, who can count on his support or at least his tolerance, commit abuses when their wishes are not satisfied by the civil authorities.

This arrangement is the inevitable consequence of a situation in which General Gabriel Barrios, a serrano who has controlled his native region for many years, has contracted many political and social commitments. A compensatory factor for all that which such a state of affairs has produced, is that, with the exception of the incidents highlighted by the governor of the State of Puebla, the whole of the Sierra enjoys a situation of total peace, with complete security for all those using the roads within the region.<sup>36</sup>

The report drew particular attention to the recent federal elections, suggesting that the tension between the distinct groups had been escalated by Barrios' apparent condoning of abuses against authorities loyal to the governor. As General Viqueras had commented several years earlier, there were inherent dangers in allowing a native serrano to control his home territory for any extended period. Heredia suggested that the social and political compromises that existed between prominent serranos and Barrios were an inevitable consequence of such a situation. Yet Heredia's overall conclusion that the majority of the Sierra enjoyed a state of peace and security may have been the treasured prize that persuaded both Obregón and Calles to ignore successive warnings of the consequences of leaving Barrios in control of the Sierra.

As a post-script to Heredia's report, Barrios' military commander, General Amaya forwarded a covering letter to Calles enclosing Barrios' reply to Tirado's charges. Amaya was fully supportive of Barrios and suggested that the recent difficulties had been accentuated by the governor's decision to remove democratically elected local authorities and replace them with provisional municipal councils. Amaya judged this move to be a tactic by Tirado in preparation for the forthcoming state elections. In conclusion, Amaya expressed his conviction that, 'if all your supporters worked with the loyalty and sincerity that señor Tirado displays, then your Supreme Government would be lost and the Revolution would fall into the most sorrowful collapse'.<sup>37</sup>

Amaya's comments reveal an interesting aspect of the differences between Barrios and Tirado. The various skirmishes had the effect of revealing those individuals upon whom Barrios could depend. Clearly, Barrios could count on successive commanders in Puebla: Almazán had been fully supportive of Barrios in the 1923 military investigation; Amaya proved equally resolute in the face of Tirado's attack three years later. Beyond the military, José María Flores was in frequent contact with those with political influence in Mexico City in his capacity as chief overseer of the federal road building project in Zacapoaxtla. The widespread federal encouragement for such schemes and the progress that had been achieved made federal officials well-disposed towards personal approaches from Flores.

Within the federal congress, Barrios could rely on another crucial source of support. During the height of Barrios' defence against Tirado's charges, Constantino Molina, a serrano deputy, expressed his sympathies pledging, 'to defend the peacemaking, progressive and patriotic labours of Barrios from their mutual enemies in the Sierra'. Constantino Molina, a member of the Zacapoaxtla faction that opposed the local Tirado clique, suggested that up to fifteen other Puebla deputies were willing to support Barrios in his battle against Tirado and were pressing for the setting up of a formal commission that would prove Barrios' innocence of Tirado's charges. Molina assured his patron that no opportunity to expose the intrigues and political ambitions of Tirado would be missed. Molina added that efforts were being made to attract favourable press coverage and that a propaganda campaign had already been launched to enable the true nature of progress and development in the Sierra to reach a wider audience.<sup>38</sup>

As Molina's letter demonstrates, by 1926 Barrios' network of supporters had extended far beyond the Sierra. Yet it would be mistaken to draw broader

conclusions of Barrios' ambitions from the impressive array of political weapons that he possessed. The status of his opponent forced Barrios into employing all the means at his disposal to ensure Tirado's fall; Barrios' case against Tirado was helped considerably by his allies in the Ministry of War, state and federal congresses. It should not be assumed, however, that the strength and intensity of Barrios' attack reflected any grand ambition to dominate Puebla state politics. Tirado became an enemy, not because Barrios wanted to become governor of Puebla, but because Tirado was an obstacle to Barrios' ambitions in the Sierra. Similarly, the increased incidence of alleged political interference by Barrios' men at elections, merely highlighted his need to be represented in the local congress. Whichever group was in power in Puebla City, it could not be allowed to jeopardise Barrios' designs on the Sierra.

Because Barrios demanded absolute control, it was essential that he secured his support at the most local level. Ayuntamientos could not be allowed to show loyalty towards a state governor whose agenda might contradict Barrios' ambitions. This lack of tolerance was most commonly exposed during local elections. As has already been established, a system of reciprocity ensured that at crucial times Barrios could rely on the obedience of those with influence in the serrano communities. As Heredia observed, groups of armed Indians were commonly at hand to coerce potentially troublesome local authorities into towing the line. Force remained an option for all those who could not be peacefully persuaded to pledge loyalty to Barrios. As Tirado complained, those public employees who performed their constitutional duties towards the state executive were often forced to leave their posts and communities.

A closer inspection of the details of Tirado's accusations reveals another interesting fact. The cases that Tirado produced concerned alleged abuses of officials in Villa Juárez, Zacatlán, Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan. These abuses



related to the battle for control of important regional cabeceras. Serrano cabeceras frequently harboured bitter divisions as different factions fought for political and economic control. While such conflict identified the dominant group with which Barrios might do business, opposing factors represented a focal point around which political opposition to the Barrios cacicazgo might rally. In a cabecera such as Zacapoaxtla, such opposition found a patron in a figure like Tirado; in others settlements, protection lay in the more theoretical, and less reliable, guarantees provided under the state Constitution. The regional importance of these cabeceras made control of their ayuntamientos vital, and if the imposition of secretaries and other officials was insufficient to ensure obedience, then the nearby presence of federal troop garrisons was a constant reminder of Barrios' ability to use coercion. Yet the use of force was not a widespread phenomenon, even in cabeceras. As Heredia underlined, most of the Sierra remained peaceful under Barrios. Such stability suggests that Barrios had already secured the loyalty of many communities within the region.

A clear example of the direct connection between local politics and the power struggle at state level, is provided by a letter sent to Barrios in October 1926 from Miguel Manzano, municipal president of Tetela de Ocampo. Manzano referred to the cool response that he had received from his efforts to establish friendly co-operation with Barrios, and presumed that this was because Barrios thought him to be a Tirado supporter. Manzano assured Barrios that while he had a constitutional responsibility towards the governor, this did not mean that he was an unconditional supporter of Tirado. Indeed, he added, he had always spoken in support of Barrios when the occasion arose.<sup>39</sup>

The dilemma for more diligent public officials becomes apparent. While Manzano's loyalty lay to the governor in distant Puebla City, his safest option was to defer to the cacique who lived at the top of the hill overlooking his town.

Some officials in remote settlements far from Barrios' garrisons, or in larger towns might opt for loyalty to their governor. Yet given recent precedents, the majority of local officials in the Sierra would have judged Barrios more likely to survive any given governor. Manzano's loyalty towards Tirado was of little comfort, given that Tirado's departure as governor was only weeks away. In the light of political changes in Puebla City, Manzano's letter to Barrios is both understandable, and provides a clear image of the realities of political life in the Sierra under Barrios.

### *Broader political considerations*

While Barrios appeared to have won the battle against Tirado, the injuries sustained weakened his position in a much broader war. Tirado's political connections widened the implications of the dispute to a degree that far exceeded the prize at stake. In fighting for strictly limited geographical supremacy, Barrios was forced to implicate not only state politicians but federal and presidential officials. In attacking Tirado, Barrios had to go to great lengths to reassure the president that he was not also challenging federal authority. The explicit nature of Tirado's claims that Barrios was declaring a rebellion against Puebla's government would have sent alarm bells ringing through the corridors of power in Mexico City. The Delahuerta, and later the Serrano, rebellions had already made federal authorities highly sensitive to the antics of their military officers. It is little wonder, therefore, that Calles reacted so quickly to Tirado's charges by sending Heredia to investigate the claims.

The fact that Heredia largely substantiated Tirado's claims had several implications. While the argument that Tirado was an ineffective governor may eventually have been accepted, Calles would have noted Barrios' expansionist policy in the Sierra with some anxiety. Barrios had rarely been free from

controversy, but in Heredia's report, Calles was presented with the first independent report confirming the extent of the military cacicazgo in the Sierra de Puebla. In addition, Heredia largely contradicted the defence of Barrios given by General Amaya, the *Jefe de Operaciones Militares* in Puebla City. Such contradictions must have raised suspicions of the motives of the region's most senior federal officer. Finally, in drawing upon all his reserves in Mexico City to defeat Tirado, Barrios would have exposed the full extent of his network: up to fifteen deputies in congress, favourable national and regional press coverage, the support of intellectuals such as Vicente Lombardo Toledano, and the backing of the Ministry of War's most senior officer in Puebla. In 1926, the display of such an armoury may not have caused immediate alarm in the Presidency. But the exercise may have marked Barrios' card for future consideration. In making his strength count, Barrios may have defeated a lesser rival only to create greater enemies in the future.

Overcoming the Tirado challenge was obviously a major theme during the formative years of Barrios' cacicazgo, and the repercussions of the conflict in the Sierra reached state and national capitals. Similarly, the political conflicts at national and state level were to have effects in the Sierra de Puebla. Barrios' ability to respond positively to each had a significant bearing on the strength of his tenure as military leader in the Sierra.

It has already been suggested that Barrios was given the freedom to establish his cacicazgo largely due to his unswerving loyalty to the federal government during the period of widespread political and military uncertainty following the fall of Carranza. The Delahuerta rebellion once again undermined the stability of central government and forced military commanders throughout the Republic to redefine their loyalties. Generals like Fortunato Maycotte, who had enjoyed a position of trust and seniority within the federal army, were found

wanting in their adherence to the president; others such as Barrios, about whom there persisted significant doubts, showed a loyalty that proved vital.

Barrios' decision to remain loyal, and the fact that in doing so he found himself among the victors, had both military and political implications. During the months of the campaign, Barrios and his representative, Ricardo Márquez Galindo, maintained frequent contact with both Obregón and Calles. As Barrios' loyalty became increasingly apparent at a time when others were defecting, the subsequent trust and goodwill that Barrios gained was of considerable help in the future. When, for example, accusations of disloyalty were made against Barrios' men, their loyalty against Delahuertistas could be cited to discredit such claims. The credit that Barrios had earned in the past provided him with a period of relative autonomy in his actions in the Sierra, free from the scrutiny of his military and political superiors.

The Delahuerta campaign forged an equally crucial relationship of mutual understanding between Barrios and his military superior, General Almazán. Barrios had already received strong support from his new superior when, in May 1923, Almazán sent a detailed report to Calles exonerating Barrios from suspicion regarding charges of abuse and political interference.<sup>40</sup> Subsequent correspondence reveals that a friendship quickly developed between the two men. The support of the *Jefe de Operaciones Militares* was a valuable acquisition as Almazán acted as a filter to protect Barrios against the attacks of others. Any charge presented to the president, the Ministry of War or the governor, would eventually be relayed back to the *Jefatura* in Puebla for further investigation. The friendship between Almazán and Barrios, sealed by their mutual fight against Delahuertistas, considerably reduced the chances of Almazán sending a critical report on Barrios' conduct back to his superiors in Mexico City.

A letter from Barrios to Ricardo Márquez Galindo, during the height of Barrios' fight with Tirado, makes it clear that Barrios regarded Almazán as one of his most valuable military and political allies:

[...] there is a persistent, widespread rumour that Deputy Enrique Hernández is going to take the place of Tirado. Come what may, it is vital that you, and all well-intentioned revolutionary elements, work to ensure that the President does not appoint Hernández. All of us realise that if Hernández were to become governor it would be a disaster for the state as he is incapable of uniting the various worthy factions. Furthermore, neither he nor his brother, Lindoro, have ever shown themselves to be faithful to any cause other than to enrich themselves. In this aspect, they are no different from others like Reyes Márquez, Francisco Hernández, Bautista etc.; they are only interested in feeding their insatiable ambitions and, consequentially, their influence would be even worse than that of Tirado.

This being the case, it is vital that we find a responsible figure who has the capability of governing in unison with the efforts of the sincere elements within the state, who can unite the different groups in order to reduce the risk of future instability. Suitable candidates include generals Bravo Izquierdo, Almazán, Cruz, and civilian politicians such as Abraham Lucas, Rue etc.. Any one of these men would be capable of providing a leadership upon which both the state and federal governments could depend.<sup>41</sup>

This letter reveals Barrios' political consciousness and who he counted among his friends and foes. His fears regarding an unsuitable replacement for Tirado were not completely unfounded. Sánchez López suggests that Bautista was using all his influence to have Enrique Hernández installed as interim governor.<sup>42</sup> Barrios had every reason to stop Hernández reaching the governorship. The Hernández family, based in Huauchinango, had long been military enemies of Barrios, most recently during the Delahuerta rebellion. Barrios would justifiably interpret any ascendancy of members of the Hernández family as a threat to his position in the Sierra. Having subdued one threat to his authority in the eastern Sierra, he did not wish to see another emerge in the North.

It is significant too, that Barrios' list of suitable candidates did not include the eventual choice, Manuel Montes. This may have reflected his stated concern that the appointee should be capable of uniting the various factions within Puebla politics. As Montes' period as governor was to demonstrate, Barrios might have correctly dismissed Montes as lacking such qualities. A further, important factor in Barrios overlooking Montes was the agrarian background of the caudillo. Like Bautista, Montes represented a significant sector of an agrarian block in state politics pushing for an acceleration of agrarian reform.<sup>43</sup> Barrios shared few of the aspirations of the *agrarista* cause. While he may have acted in some ways to improve the prospects of the serrano campesino, he did not feel that the granting of individual land plots was the best way to achieve such improvements.

Among Barrios' preferences for the job of governor, previous friendship and political cooperation between Barrios and Abraham Lucas made Lucas an obvious candidate. Among the military options, General Roberto Cruz is interesting: Cruz had taken over from Almazán as the commander of military operations in 1924. Barrios obviously had not wasted any time in establishing good relations with Cruz; so much so that in November 1924, Cruz was happy to confirm to Obregón that he considered Barrios a good friend and an officer who had always carried out his duties in a loyal and obedient manner.<sup>44</sup>

Details of Barrios' political links with Bravo Izquierdo are sparse, but it is clear that Tirado viewed Bravo Izquierdo as one of his political enemies.<sup>45</sup> During 1926 Bravo Izquierdo was based at the Ministry of War as head of Infantry. He would, therefore, have been in regular contact with Barrios' headquarters in Zacatlán and with Ricardo Márquez Galindo who, during these years, played a multiple role as political lobbyist, politician and military requisitions officer.<sup>46</sup> Certainly by June 1926, Bravo Izquierdo regarded both

Barrios and Márquez Galindo as close friends upon whom he could rely to help him with the most trivial of personal dilemmas.<sup>47</sup>

Beyond indicating his preferences for the governorship, Barrios' letter to Márquez Galindo provides a more general impression of how he viewed his own political position. While the appointment of a governor other than from his list indicated the limits of his political influence, Barrios' letter reveals a deep concern for state politics and the belief that he and his political allies were in a position to influence the outcome. The letter twice refers to Barrios' desire to unite like-minded revolutionary *poblanos* in the interests of progress. If one takes into account the fact that this was a confidential letter between trusted friends, then Barrios' expressed desires can not be dismissed as mere rhetoric. Yet it is clear from his attitude towards campesinos that his vision of revolutionary progress did not encompass the agrarian ideals of Zapata and Montes. Barrios was primarily interested in communication and educational developments: projects which Tirado's supporters in Zacapoaxtla had tried to hamper.<sup>48</sup> Barrios' political drive, therefore, was geared towards ensuring that those with influence in Puebla were supportive of his attempts to improve communications in the Sierra. At face value, few politicians could have afforded to criticise such projects. However, when larger issues were at stake, as was the case with Tirado, ways might be found to criticise the impulse and manner of such reform while still being seen to be pro-development. Barrios was therefore concerned that Tirado was not replaced by someone of the same mould.

Barrios' progressive policies placed him in the contradictory role of enlightened cacique. This ambiguity must have forced many to question whether the shared desire to bring progress to the Sierra could justify the risk of being deemed to support caciquismo. Those such as Abraham Lucas had few

apparent problems in lending support to Barrios and, indeed, could benefit from mutual reciprocation of such support. Before his father's death, Lucas had known and liaised with Barrios. Unlike his brother Miguel, Abraham Lucas was prepared to yield his father's military influence to Barrios and concentrate on his own political future. Together with Márquez Galindo and Demetrio Santa Fe, Lucas provided faithful political representation for Barrios throughout the 1920s and, as *La Opinión* pointed out, was by Barrios' side until the final moments of the cacicazgo.<sup>49</sup> During these years, Abraham Lucas constantly occupied a representative position in state or federal politics, most frequently fighting under the banner of Márquez Galindo's *Liga Revolucionaria de Puebla*. During the Carranza years, Lucas clearly identified with the strong liberal tendencies in the Sierra. In 1926 Barrios provided financial support for Lucas' senatorial campaign, a candidacy endorsed by the *Partido Laborista del Estado* and the federal and state *Alianzas de Partidos Socialistas*.<sup>50</sup>

Such are the convolutions of political alliances, that left-wing politicians and regional caciques could be seen to support the same candidate. At various points during the 1920s, the political environment forced such accommodations for the attainment of common goals. While such an environment existed, Barrios attracted the attentions of unlikely bed-fellows; none more so than of the revered left-wing intellectual, one of the '*siete sabidos*' of the Revolution, and one-time governor of Puebla, Vicente Lombardo Toledano.<sup>51</sup>



### *The Cacique and the Intellectual*

The paths of Gabriel Barrios and Vicente Lombardo Toledano did not cross as a result of any deep seated ideological affinity; rather a coincidence in time and space led them into an unlikely alliance which lasted several years before their natural differences brought the inevitable rupture. Apart from their serrano origins, it is hard to find much in common between the two men: Barrios the Indian soldier who chose to live in rural obscurity; Toledano, the mestizo intellectual who forsook his native Teziutlán for the stimulating environment of the national capital. Sánchez López records Toledano's own admission of the inappropriate nature of his governorship of Puebla in December 1923. While Rome, or to be more exact, parts of Puebla burned, Toledano and his intellectual friends set about redirecting the government's energies towards educational facilities. This may have saved him from the sharp edge of Gruening's pen but, as Toledano later reflected, the *poblanos* viewed him and his government, 'as rare animals, not a government but a Greek tragedy, nothing more than intellectuals'.<sup>52</sup>

If these reflections suggest that the realities of political life had, albeit belatedly, dawned upon the intellectual, the man of letters was a quick learner. A further harsh truth was that in order to obtain a political post in the Sierra one's chances were greatly enhanced by recognising and employing the influence held by Gabriel Barrios. Any distain that Toledano might have felt in rubbing shoulders with the Indian general might have been compensated by Barrios' proclaimed interest in regional development; a common desire that bridged class and culture. Having failed as state governor, intellect and ideology could provide little to bolster Toledano's attempts to become federal deputy in his home town of Teziutlán in June 1924. Governor Guerrero had already replaced all the ayuntamientos named by Toledano with individuals

regarded by Toledano as ex-Delahuertistas. Guerrero continued his opposition by backing Manuel Villavicencio Toscana to contend the position of deputy in Teziutlán, a man described by Toledano as 'an impostor, unknown within the state and a political turncoat'. Toledano sought Obregón's protection against a travesty of political rights allegedly committed by the opposition, while his supporters had 'no weapons for the fight except honour, clarity of ideas and hopes for a brighter future for the Republic'.<sup>53</sup> Two weeks after Toledano's plea, his defenceless theorists learned that in the tough world of Mexican politics during the 1920s there was no substitute for muscle. Obregón began to receive correspondence of a different nature:

Intervention of Barrios forces permitted abuses by *laborista* elements. Stop. Collecting officer pleads protection if forces in excess of those needed for peace keeping are not withdrawn. Stop. Forces constitute threat to civil liberties. Stop. Ministry [of War] has been contacted, request that you do likewise. Stop. Manuel Villavicencio.<sup>54</sup>

While Toledano's appeal to the president, and Barrios' subsequent actions might not have been connected, it would not have been beyond the considerable intellectual capacity of Toledano to recognise the substantive help that brawn could give to brain. According to press reports, the subsequent elections in Teziutlán recorded a clear majority in favour of the governor's candidate. The report in *Excelsior* accused Barrios forces of issuing illegal documentation in favour of Toledano even though the municipal president had already issued credentials to Villavicencio in accordance with the law.<sup>55</sup>

On this occasion, Barrios was unable to get his man elected. Toledano accepted a post as an alderman of the ayuntamiento of his preferred surroundings of Mexico City. Yet correspondence demonstrates a warm friendship between Toledano and Barrios and an acknowledgement by Toledano of the usefulness of Barrios' influence in the Sierra.<sup>56</sup> While in Mexico City,

Toledano was in regular contact with Barrios' deputies in the federal congress and by October 1925, deputy Ricardo Márquez Galindo was pleased to report to Demetrio Barrios that the parliamentary block had resolved 'the case of Toledano' in a favourable manner and that Toledano would shortly enter the chamber.<sup>57</sup> The letter suggests that Barrios' political representatives in the federal congress were working for the installation of Toledano within the same, a feat which was achieved by the end of 1925.

The co-operation between Barrios and Toledano reveals a tangled web of political intrigue. Barrios may have extended his help to Toledano in recognition of their shared desire for progress in the Sierra.<sup>58</sup> Alternatively, Barrios' support may have been a move to help Toledano to a position of influence in order to strike another vital blow against Claudio Tirado. It would appear that Barrios was not the only political enemy within Tirado's sights. On more than one occasion, Tirado had complained to Obregón that Toledano had instigated a malicious campaign of lies in the national press regarding events in Teziutlán. The Sierra town became the battleground in a war of words: Tirado was accused of illegal interference in local affairs and obstructing the right of unions to organise, while Toledano was, allegedly, mounting a systematic attack on state authorities which threatened to disrupt public order.<sup>59</sup> Tirado's subsequent move to impose his own ayuntamiento in Teziutlán led to Toledano's call for a federal enquiry which, Sánchez López suggests, played a vital part in the eventual downfall of the Tirado administration. With Toledano's appeal for a federal enquiry fortified by his position as deputy, he had cause to be grateful to Barrios' representatives in the federal congress who had helped secure his position. For Barrios, the unlikely alliance with the intellectual had provided yet another weapon in the armoury against Tirado.

The battle against Tirado having been won, a rift emerged between Toledano and Barrios. In late 1926, at the climax of the political tussle with Tirado, Toledano refuted General Amaya's allegations of military involvement in the political affairs of Teziutlán.<sup>60</sup> In 1928, however, Toledano's changing sympathies were reflected in an article in *La Revista Teziutlán*:

Neither land disputes, commercial competition, interchange of products, mass exodus nor frequent individual travel occur in this region. Life revolves around the family hut and, as a consequence, the horizon of all anxieties lies at the ridge of the nearest hill. Such a land will only defeat caciquismo and the perpetuation of barbarism if it embraces intellectual and physical stimuli.<sup>61</sup>

Months later, Toledano asked the central committee of the *Partido Laborista Mexicano* to lodge complaints before the president and the Ministry of War of the victimisation of *laborista* supporters in Teziutlán by Barrios forces.<sup>62</sup>

Toledano was reflecting a more general change in the political tide. He might still advocate the reforms that had previously aligned him with Barrios, but had transformed the debate to argue that only by continued reform could the caciquismo of people like Barrios be destroyed. Toledano was pursuing a form of progress in the Sierra that would afford protection for the campesino and the worker: unionisation would stop the exploitative ways of the past and provide the fruits of the Revolution to all. Toledano's themes were, of course, echoes of a more common trend within the state of Puebla. Montes' gubernatorial experiment had failed and Governor Bravo Izquierdo presided over the rising prominence of *poblano laboristas*.

The political split between Barrios and Toledano was seen most clearly by the decision of Márquez Galindo's *Liga Revolucionaria* to promote its own candidate to contest the post of deputy in Teziutlán against Toledano.<sup>63</sup> What is less clear is the difference that existed between the *Liga's* policies and those of

its former ally, the *laborista* Toledano. '*La Voz de la Sierra*', the *Liga's* propaganda magazine, graphically portrayed the *Liga's* doctrine:

Onboard a transatlantic liner three gentlemen conversed:

'Without capital, one cannot produce anything', stated the capitalist.  
'Without an army, there is neither respect nor order', added the military officer.  
'Without religion, there is no morality', said the priest.

A passenger in the third class listened to the conversation, smiled and regretted that he was not allowed to join in.

During the night the ship capsized in a terrible storm. The four men survived and reached the shores of a deserted island. They cut wood, made a fire, built a shelter, gathered fruit and hunted animals. And while eating by the fireside, exhausted from the exertions of the day, they felt content and looked forward to resting on the pile of dried leaves that they had gathered to form a bed.

Then the third class passenger summarised in five words, what he had wanted to say to his companions during their conversation aboard the ship:

'Without work, there is nothing.'<sup>64</sup>

The *laboristas* would have wholly endorsed such sentiments and many others professed by the *Liga*: strict application of constitutional articles concerning public/private land ownership, agrarian and labour reform, access to public appointments for the lower and middle classes, improved education and communications and, above all, respect for civil liberty as the basis of a truly effective form of suffrage. Indeed even the *Liga's* public support for the re-election of Obregón was insufficient to alienate the *laboristas*. With the defeat of the Serrano rebellion, Obregón's re-election was a formality. For *laboristas* to retain any semblance of political influence, they too were forced to seek an accommodation with Obregón.

The split between Toledano and Barrios, therefore, was not based on major contradictions in stated policies. Toledano abandoned his former patron very much for the reasons that he had previously sought an understanding with him: political survival. Toledano's ambitions could no longer be served by

being seen to endorse the cacique of the Sierra de Puebla. *Laborista* political fortunes reflected the watershed in Mexican politics caused by the assassination of Obregón in July 1928. The shock waves of this political earthquake took less than two years to reach the Sierra de Puebla and shake the foundations of the Barrios cacicazgo.

### *The Federal assault on military caciquismo*

In July 1928 Obregón was assassinated. Amid strong suspicion that the CROM was implicated in the crime, Morones and other *laborista* colleagues resigned from the Calles administration. Calles himself had become increasingly sensitive to the charge that he was a 'bolshevik' president and during the previous year had been distancing himself from the *laborista* movement in order to assume a more moderate stance.<sup>65</sup> With the *agrarista* and *laborista* movements involved in an acrimonious struggle to capture any scrap of political influence that remained, Calles began the definitive push towards the concentration of political power, a move that would eventually lead to the formation of the *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* (PNR).

This transformation in national politics had an immediate impact in Puebla City. General Bravo Izquierdo's long period as governor probably reflected the need for a military governor during the Serrano rebellion. But Bravo Izquierdo's *laborista* sympathies made him a useful tool for increasing federal control in the state. As Sánchez López points out, Bravo Izquierdo struck a fatal blow against the independent spirits of the *poblano agraristas*: Montes was killed and land reform virtually ended. Reflecting the ascendancy of *laboristas* in Puebla, and actively backed by Morones and Calles, Bravo Izquierdo encouraged the development of the newly formed *Confederación Sindicato de Obreros y Campesinos del Estado de Puebla*. However, when

Calles moved to distance himself from *laborista* policies, the *laborista* movement in Puebla was forced to react. This had serious military and political implications for the Barrios cacicazgo in the Sierra.

A noticeable feature of the June 1928 federal elections in the Sierra was the response to complaints regarding Barrios troops' political intimidation in support of *Liga Revolucionaria* candidates. Even though the governorship was occupied by Bravo Izquierdo, both the governor and the *Jefe de Operaciones Militares*, General Almada, regularly warned Barrios to keep his troops out of politics.<sup>66</sup> A change had taken place at the *Jefatura* in Puebla, who normally would have defended their commander in the Sierra. Barrios increasingly received orders instructing him to desist from actions likely to cause complaint. Almada's contrasting attitude to those of past military chiefs, reflected a new political climate: a climate in which efforts to bring the army under central government control were beginning to work. Although the October 1927 Serrano rebellion had reminded central government that the task was not yet complete, the failure of the rebellion to attract greater support confirmed that the reforms were moving in the right direction.

Although Barrios had always been ostensibly centralist in his loyalties to the federal government, developments were now taking place to call Barrios' bluff. Barrios began to face demands of loyalty that encroached upon his limited autonomy. Even before Obregón's assassination, the underlying trend towards centralisation had forced Barrios to show his true colours and make a more independent political stand. This scenario explains the rumour which circulated in the Sierra during the Spring of 1928 that Barrios was likely to bid for the governorship later that year. Speculation in the national press provoked a letter of encouragement from Miguel Andréu Almazán, who sent Barrios his congratulations and pledged his support in the forthcoming campaign.<sup>67</sup>

(Presumably the possibility of his brother, Leonides, also standing for the governorship had not yet emerged.) The widespread nature of the rumour and the absence of any swift denial by Barrios, suggests Barrios was testing the water in order to judge the strength of support. In the event, Barrios' chances of success were few: his development initiatives might attract considerable encouragement within the Sierra, but he would find it hard to obtain significant support beyond the region. Additionally, correspondence and the *Liga's* own propaganda firmly identified Barrios as a re-electionist. Obregón's assassination in July 1928 left Barrios isolated in a political arena once again occupied by Calles. Rather than risk public humiliation, Barrios decided to mask his political stance by putting Ricardo Márquez Galindo forward as his gubernatorial candidate.

Barrios' political isolation became evident in September 1928 in Calles' speech before the federal congress. Ostensibly aimed at destroying speculation that he might retain the presidency, Calles used the opportunity to publicise to the nation the government's determination to rid the country of rule by local caudillos. In Puebla, this policy had already resulted in the deaths of both Montes and Barbosa: attention was now focussed on the cacique of the Sierra.<sup>68</sup>

Post-revolutionary caudillismo thrived upon the weakness of central authority. Barrios' cacicazgo in the Sierra was not unique. Where it does demand attention, however, is in the disproportionate degree of autonomy that Barrios possessed. In other states, Barrios might have expected his control of the Sierra to be dependent upon loyalty to a regional caudillo; someone like Cedillo who eventually assumed the executive powers of San Luis Potosí. Yet the unusual political circumstances in Puebla City helped to fashion the nature of Barrios' cacicazgo. Puebla was unlike Tlaxcala, where the federal government dominated local policies. Nor was it like other states where regional caudillos



had sufficient authority to impose their political will upon local caciques. The political vacuum in Puebla City provided Barrios with the freedom to arrange serrano politics in a manner most likely to favour his broader objectives. Yet with his political ambitions limited to the Sierra, Barrios was never able to benefit from the independent source of finances available to those regional caudillos who controlled the state government. Barrios' principal restraint, therefore, was the need to demonstrate loyalty to his military superiors in Mexico City. Their continued patronage was vital in providing Barrios with the financial and material support needed to match his political ambitions in the Sierra.

Although Gabriel Barrios never displayed a strong interest in taking control of the state government, the direct relationship between his autonomy in the Sierra and the power vacuum in Puebla City made it imperative that he take a keen interest in the local congress. In this respect, the governorship of Claudio Tirado posed a threat that the neither José María Sánchez and Manuel Montes presented. While the military capacity of the agrarian caudillos was greater than anything Tirado could muster, their objectives were concentrated upon agrarian issues on the *altiplano*. Tirado's sphere of political influence, however, clashed directly with Barrios' designs on the Sierra. Strengthened by his position as governor, Tirado was encouraged to do what no other politician had yet attempted; to take on the cacique from Cuacuila. In repelling Tirado's initiative and pushing state political authority back to the *altiplano*, Barrios was obliged to draw upon his considerable federal connections.

Political circumstances in Puebla City contrived to present Gabriel Barrios with the opportunity of dealing directly with his political superiors in Mexico City. This gained him access to a quality of federal connections rarely enjoyed by local caciques who, more often than not, were subject to the

authority of regional caudillos. These links enabled Barrios and his political representatives more effectively to promote and defend the policies that he sought to adopt in the Sierra. While such a visible stance eventually made Barrios an obvious target when the vacuum in Puebla politics had been filled, while the period of uncertainty remained, his high profile enabled Barrios to broaden his appeal to the federal government. He was not only a loyal military officer, but a regional leader of considerable political value. The extent of his non-military utility to the Revolution is considered in the following chapter.

### Footnotes for Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> Evans, R., *The Rosalie Evans' Letters from Mexico*, (London, [n.d.]).

The letters of Rosalie Evans describe her struggle to retain ownership of her hacienda in the state of Puebla. Part of her difficulties lay in the obvious confusion that existed between state and federal politicians, and between politicians and soldiers, regarding where ultimate authority lay.

<sup>2</sup> Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*, pp. 468-69.

Tirado achieved his dream, as the gold lettering on marble statues in the plaza in Puebla City testifies.

<sup>3</sup> From 30 April 1920, when Alfonso Cabrera ceased to be recognised as governor, Colonel C. García held the provisional governorship for a week, followed by General R. Rojas who occupied both the governorship and military command of Puebla until 17 July 1920. The State Supreme Tribunal had, in fact, designated Lic. Roberto Labastida as Cabrera's replacement, only for the federal government to override its decision.

<sup>4</sup> Hernández Enríquez, *Historia Moderna de Puebla*, II, pp. 46 and 64-65.

Sánchez was a close friend and compadre to Obregón. He fought as a Zapatista and later as a Constitutionalist, before declaring his support for Obregón and the Plan de Agua Prieta. He founded the regional party, *Partido Demócrata Socialista* and is best remembered for his attempt to assassinate the labour leader, Luis Morones, in the *Cámara de Diputados* in 1924.

Evans, *Letters*, p. 213.

Rosalie Evans believed that Obregón had promised José María Sánchez possession of her hacienda when she eventually abandoned it.

<sup>5</sup> The choice of Manjarrez, a Sonoran deputy closely aligned to De la Huerta, indicated the ascendancy of the pro-De la Huerta *Partido Cooperativista* within the federal congress.

Wenceslao Macip, federal deputy for the district of Zacapoaxtla, nominated Manjarrez for the post of provisional governor. The political significance of this to the Sierra de Puebla, will be discussed in chapter six.

<sup>6</sup> General Almazán arrested Manjarrez on 2 Dec. 1923 and the federal government imposed Vicente Lombardo Toledano, a radical intellectual from Teziutlán, as interim governor. His governorship was interrupted almost immediately when Delahuertistas regained military control of Puebla City and imposed their own governor, Francisco Espinosa Fluery. Reinforced by troops from Tlaxcala, Almazán retook the capital on 22 Dec. 1923.

<sup>7</sup> Hernández Enríquez, *Historia Moderna de Puebla*, II, pp. 102-3.

Montes had been an officer in José María Sánchez's agrarian army and had ambitions of assuming his former leader's place at the centre of Puebla state politics. Montes took an active part in organising a campesino army from Huejotzingo to combat Delahuertistas.

<sup>8</sup> Sánchez López, *La Institucionalización*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>9</sup> Dulles, *Yesterday in Mexico*, p. 310.

This hypothesis is all the more likely when one bears in mind that the *Jefe de Operaciones Militares* in Puebla, General Almazán, later refused to carry out what he described as Calles' 'infamous religious persecution.'

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Arnulfo Barrios, 24 Sept. 1993, Tetela de Ocampo.

Barrios' son, Arnulfo, suggests that his father did not take a direct role in politics, but that all Sierra politicians sought his support because he was seen as the man of progress and a man of the people. He believes that politicians recognised his father's affinity with serranos and tried to use him as a means of gaining the support needed to satisfy their ambitions.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with José María Barrios, 10 Dec. 1993, Tonalapa, Tetela. Luis Cabrera was godfather to Gabriel Barrios' first son, José María Barrios.

For a summary of Luis Cabrera's childhood and early political career see: Meyer, E., *Luis Cabrera: teórico y crítico de la Revolución*, (Mexico, 1972), pp. 11-21.

<sup>12</sup> *El Monitor*, 3 May 1920, no. 658, "Extra".

<sup>13</sup> *El Universal de Puebla*, 10 May 1920, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> APGL. Letter dated 21 Feb. 1917 from Abraham Lucas to his niece, Elena. Abraham Lucas suggests that his previous military and political actions resulted more from the desire to support his father than any personal deep convictions to the Constitutionalist cause. He stated that now his father had died, he wished to assume a more private life.

APGL. Correspondence dated 10 Oct. 1916 and 16 Oct. 1916 between the *Partido Liberal del Estado de Puebla* and Abraham Lucas.

In October 1916, the central commission of the *Partido Liberal* nominated Abraham Lucas as their candidate for the local congress for the district of Tetela. Lucas turned down the invitation, pointing to an earlier decision taken locally to nominate Leopoldo Vázquez Mellardo as candidate and Ricardo Márquez Galindo as his deputy.

AMT de O, Caja 9, Gobernación, exp. 44, 45.

A letter dated 10 July 1918 from the *Centro directivo de los clubs liberales del Estado de Puebla* reveals that at this time Ricardo Márquez Galindo was its president.

<sup>15</sup> AMT de O, Caja 28, exp. 30, 1291, Gobernación.

Details of the candidates of the *Partido Liberal Independiente* appear in the party's circular to the municipal president of Tetela de Ocampo dated 10 Oct. 1920.

AGNP. Vol 2, 1920-1. Caja 12, 119.

See also, documents dated 8 Nov. 1920 written by the *Partido Liberal Independiente*, "Benito Juárez", Xaltateopan, Tetela de Ocampo.

<sup>16</sup> *El Monitor*, 27 January 1921, no. 925, p. 1.

The first indication of Barrios' views regarding the candidacy of Sánchez suggests that he had little time for Sánchez or the *Partido Liberal Independiente*. The article reports on Barrios' attempts to execute a man who had been caught in possession of a letter, apparently sent by Sánchez, inviting the man to raise a rebellion in the serrano town of Ahuacatlán. The local office of the *Partido Liberal* managed to obtain a stay of execution, and reported that a rubber copy of Sánchez's signature had been stolen from their offices. The paper speculated that Barrios had colluded with the sender of the letter in order to incriminate the receiver of the letter, the candidacy of Sánchez, or the *Partido Liberal* of Ahuacatlán.

*El Monitor*, 21 Aug. 1921, no. 1138, p. 1.

Sánchez was concerned about the volatile situation in the Sierra and wished Barrios to begin a process of disarming serranos who did not possess a license to carry arms. In order to convey his suggestion, the governor had first to send representatives to the Sierra to establish a means of dialogue with the serrano cacique.

<sup>17</sup> *El Monitor*, 27 May 1921, 11 June 1921, 25 June 1921, 9 July 1921.

While Gabriel Barrios did not appear to lend political support to Sánchez Pontón, he showed hesitance in following Ministry of War orders for him to take punitive action against the ex-governor for his use of violence in attempting to take possession of a hacienda near Chignahuapan. Barrios' reluctance may have originated from a combination of a lingering affinity to the Carrancista cause as well as opposition to the agrarian reforms being promoted in Puebla City.

18 ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 14, 21, 23.

APAB. Correspondence dated 27 Nov. 1920.

APAB. Ministry of War internal correspondence, '*copia certificada*, 8 Nov. 1933'. This document refers to a declaration made on 15 Nov. 1921 by Barrios' former military commander, General Rojas, stating that Barrios had publicly recognised the Plan de Agua Prieta on 14 May 1920.

19 *El Monitor*, 16 March 1921, no. 973, p. 1; *El Universal*, 17 March 1921, no. 1611, p. 11.

20 *El Monitor*, 9 Jan. 1922, no. 1260, pp. 1 & 4.

An article assured its readers that despite the unscrupulous attempts by Sánchez to buy Barrios' support by offering him the future governorship, Barrios was too shrewd a man to fall for such a crude trick.

*El Monitor*, 27 Jan. 1922, no. 1278, p. 1.

An article reported that in various regions of Puebla groups were showing rebellious tendencies against the dictatorial governorship of Sánchez. The activities in Zacapoaxtla of the ex-Carrancista general, Antonio Medina were specifically mentioned. While the paper had no doubt that federal troops could handle any situation that threatened to get out of control, it lamented the fact that *poblanos* were driven to such extremes because of the inadequacies of their governor.

The strong anti-Sanchista tone of the articles suggests that an influential sector of Puebla society was opposed to the continued presence of the federally imposed governor.

21 FAC y T. Exp. 93, Inv. 543.

On 28 July 1921 Barrios sent a representative who met Calles and conveyed Barrios' request for financial aid for development projects of 'vital importance to the Sierra'.

*El Monitor*, 28 Aug. 1921, no. 1145, p. 6.

So appealing was Barrios' message of reconstruction, that his initiatives attracted considerable favourable press comment. The governor, who had recently established good relationships with Barrios, had contacted the *Jefatura* in Puebla urging that all possible assistance be given to enable Barrios to accomplish his proposed developments in the Sierra.

22 AMT de O, Caja 44, Gobernación. Document dated 9 June 1922; ADN, C, 2-1145, f. 36.

23 ADN, C, 2-1145, f.409 & f.429.

On 6 Jan. 1923 Quintero wrote to the Ministry of War and, referring to the difficult circumstances caused by the threat of rebellion, asked that he might be readmitted into the army as a reservist. On 1 Oct. 1923 Quintero joined the army and was based in Chignahuapan, Pue.

*Ibid.*, f. 459.

On 7 March 1924 General Jara, *Jefe del Sector en Oriental*, Pue. reported a clash with rebels in San Juan de los Llanos (Libres) that took place on 22 Feb. 1924. General Máximo Rojas was killed in the battle and among those captured by the rebels was Tranquilino Quintero. After a summary trial, Quintero and other prisoners were executed.

24 ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 913-14.

Letter dated 21 July 1922 sent to the *Jefe de Operaciones Militares* in Puebla City.

25 *Ibid.* f. 922.

Letter dated 14 Aug. 1922 from Barrios to the *Jefe de la Brigada*, Pue.

26 Hernández Enríquez, *Historia Moderna de Puebla*, III, p. 19.

Hernández Enríquez suggests that Tirado's eventual rise to the governorship in 1925 was helped by the support he received from regional caciques such as Barbosa in the south and Barrios in the north.

Sánchez López, *La Institucionalización*, p. 12.

Similarly, Sánchez López suggests that Tirado's period as governor was strengthened by the presence of Barrios' representatives in the local congress, Wenceslao Macip (employed as General Secretary of the state government) and Rufino Landero (employed as Oficial Mayor). Sánchez López argues that only when Tirado became politically isolated during 1926, did Barrios decide to withdraw his support in order to place himself in a better tactical position for the subsequent battle for power.

27 The enquiry was commissioned by the *Jefatura* in Puebla and was ordered specifically to investigate a number of charges made against Barrios and his forces by two federal deputies, Gonzalo González (Zacatlán) and Wenceslao Macip (Zacapoaxtla).

This enquiry may also have been in response to Tirado's charges of the previous year and Barrios' plea for a commission to establish the truth behind the accusations.

28 BLC.RHAM, Caja 1923. Correspondence for September 1923.

In a communique dated 6 Sept. 1923 from Barrios to Manuel L. Ortiz, *Jefe de la 18/a. Brigada*, Barrios further damaged the credibility of his accusers. In a routine report Barrios had only one item to relate: an incident in which the federal deputies, Gonzalo González, Wenceslao Macip and Gonzalo Bautista, together with the municipal president of Zacatlán, Pedro Lecona, had emerged from Zacatlán municipal palace in a drunken and rowdy state. They had proceeded to fire their guns into the air and caused widespread panic and alarm among the people of Zacatlán. Barrios reported that he had taken steps to restore order.

29 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

See the military report dated 1 May 1923 by General Almazán, *Jefe de las Operaciones Militares*, Puebla.

Interview with Francisco Landero Alamo, (Son of Rufino Landero), 10 Dec. 1993, Zacapoaxtla.

Señor Landero confirms that Rufino Landero, Claudio N. Tirado and other political allies made a concerted effort to destroy the Barrios cacicazgo. He argues that this was not for any personal reasons, nor because the *zacapoaxtecos* were against the road construction projects that Barrios brought to their region. Señor Landero stressed that the motive for attacking Barrios was because his father and Tirado objected to the way in which Barrios' actions were 'extra-legal'. They opposed the broadening of Barrios' military power to the point at which the governor's authority counted for nothing, leaving all practical authority in the Sierra to Gabriel Barrios.

30 Further evidence suggests that any allegiance between the three *zacapoaxtecos* and Barrios is highly unlikely:

AGN, O-C, 408-D-12.

In a letter dated 4 Feb 1926 Tirado informed the president that Rufino Landero, in his capacity as municipal president of Zacapoaxtla in 1923, had co-operated fully with Tirado's launch of a propaganda campaign to promote the presidential candidacy of Calles. Tirado added that during the Delahuerta rebellion, Barrios had made a 'salida en falso' from Zacapoaxtla leaving Landero unprotected and obliged to abandon his position as municipal president.

*Nuestro Diario*, 30 April 1924, no. 102, p. 1.

The Puebla paper reported on the struggle for power in Zacapoaxtla between an ayuntamiento imposed by governor Tirado, and one previously installed by the interim governor, Toledano. Wenceslao Macip clarified his own position in the dispute and stated that Barrios was continuing his antics of old by using his troops to interfere in political affairs. These are hardly the words of a Barrios supporter.

<sup>31</sup> AGN, O-C, 701-C-9.

See letter dated 13 June 1925 sent to President Calles from José María Flores.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Telegrammes sent/received June 1925.

Flores' claim was supported by a telegramme set to Barrios from Teodoro Rosas, auxiliary municipal president of Xocoyolo, Zacapoaxtla. Rosas reported that Miguel Vega Bernal (brother of Salvador) was in Zacapoaxtla, commissioned by a 'senior state government official' to make propaganda against Barrios and the road construction project.

AML, Justicia, June 1925, no. 2574.

On 24 June 1925, the procurator general of the *Comisión Nacional Agraria* for Puebla made a legal declaration recording the complaints made by the vecinos of San Miguel Tenextatiloyan concerning the threatening behaviour of Barrios' men. The vecinos claimed that they were being victimised because they had refused to support Barrios' candidate in the recent gubernatorial election. Barrios' men were said to have publicly criticised and insulted Governor Tirado and his government.

<sup>32</sup> AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, legs. 1 & 2.

<sup>33</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters July/August 1925.

Letters from Flores to Demetrio Barrios dated 24 Aug. 1925 and 28 Aug. 1925.

<sup>34</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1922. Letters for October 1925.

See letter from Márquez Galindo to Barrios dated 1 Oct. 1925; also the letter from Flores to Demetrio Barrios dated 2 Oct. 1925.

<sup>35</sup> AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 3.

See telegramme dated 16 Aug 1926 from Tirado to Calles together with extracts of telegrammes detailing alleged abuses by Barrios.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., no. 8844.

Report dated 1 Sept. 1926 from Francisco Heredia to Calles.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., no. 9274.

Memorandum dated 2 Sept. 1926 from Amaya to Calles.

<sup>38</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letters received/sent for September 1926.

See letter dated 4 Sept. 1926 from Molina to Barrios.

<sup>39</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Correspondence for November 1926.

Letter dated 20 Oct. 1926 from Miguel Manzano to Barrios.

<sup>40</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1923. Correspondence for January 1923.

General Juan Andréu Almazán took over as *Jefe de Operaciones Militares*, Puebla on 1 Jan. 1923.

<sup>41</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Correspondence for November 1926.

Letter dated 24 Nov. 1926 from Barrios to Márquez Galindo, deputy in the federal congress.

<sup>42</sup> Sánchez López, *La Institucionalización*, p. 28.

This is the same Gonzalo Bautista that Barrios, in 1923, had reported as having been drunk and disorderly in Zacatlán. (see footnote 29).

<sup>43</sup> A graphic description of the battle that Montes led against the Puebla hacendado is related in Evans, *Letters*.

44 AGN, O-C, 101-B-10.

Letter dated 26 Nov. 1924 from Cruz to Obregón.

ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 119-203. Correspondence between May-July 1925.

In answer to an enquiry sent to Cruz, provoked by complaints that Barrios was impeding agrarian reform, Cruz replied to Calles that Barrios was not involved in a case which was more accurately described as a boundary dispute between neighbouring settlements.

45 AGN, O-C, 408-D-12, leg. 1.

In a letter dated 4 Feb. 1926 sent to Torreblanca (Calles' private secretary) Tirado alleged that a group of *poblano* politicians, including Lombardo Toledano, Manuel Guerrero (brother of a former governor) and Gonzalo Bautista, were holding secret meetings in which they were conspiring against Tirado's government. Tirado alleged that their aim was to replace him as governor with Bravo Izquierdo. Tirado warned Torreblanca that none of these men could be trusted to 'respect and follow the President's policies'.

46 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letters for June 1926.

On 8 June 1926 Bravo Izquierdo addressed a letter to his 'Estimado amigo y compañero', Gabriel Barrios, advising that he had recently handed over military supplies to 'nuestro buen amigo', Márquez Galindo. The warmth of the letter suggests a friendship which exceeded the bounds of military fraternity.

47 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letters for June 1926.

In a letter dated 9 June 1926 from Bravo Izquierdo to Barrios, Bravo Izquierdo asked Barrios to procure four song birds that inhabited the Sierra. Bravo Izquierdo hoped that such a request was not too great an abuse of the friendship that he and Barrios enjoyed.

48 Schryer, *Ethnicity and Class*, pp. 127-51.

Schryer concludes that Juvencio Nochebuena, the cacique of Huehuetla, was able to manoeuvre his political position to reflect the changing climate in which he lived. Although he came to power as an agrarian leader, he managed to retain prominence by shifting the emphasis of his initiatives towards education and modernisation. More than a decade earlier, Barrios had no such transition to make.

49 *La Opinión*, 28 April 1930, no. 2148, p. 5.

50 AMT de O, Caja 50, Gobernación, 685.

On 23 June 1926, the municipal president of Tetela informed the municipal president of Puebla City of Lucas' candidacy.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Miscellaneous correspondence for July 1926.

Evidence that funds from the 46th. Battalion were diverted into Lucas' political campaign appears on a draft of the battalion's accounts for July 1926.

51 Krauze, E., *Caudillos culturales en la Revolución Mexicana*, (Mexico, 1985), p. 74.

52 Sánchez López, *La Institucionalización*, p. 9.

53 AGN, O-C, 104-P-106, leg. 1.

Telegramme dated 24 June 1924 from Lombardo Toledano to Obregón.

54 AGN, O-C, 104-P-106, leg. 2.

See telegramme dated 7 July 1924 from Villavicencio to Obregón.

55 *Excelsior*, 12 July 1924, no. 2647, p. 4.

Such incidents were not isolated, nor were they confined to Barrios. Governor Guerrero had complained to Obregón of the actions of Generals Francisco J. Barbosa, Fortino Ayaquica and others who had used intimidation to influence political proceedings and impose ayuntamientos in Zacatlán, Chiatla and elsewhere. Guerrero accused the generals of dispersing groups loyal to José María Sánchez and of trying to promote Juan Andréu Almazán as governor in order to keep Sánchez from office. (See *Excelsior*, 16 June 1924, *Edición 2a.* p. 8, no. 2648.)



56 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters for January 1925.  
Letter dated 27 Jan. 1925 from Toledano to Demetrio Barrios.

57 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters for October 1925.  
Letter dated 2 Oct. 1925 from Márquez Galindo to Demetrio Barrios.

58 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters for July/August 1925.  
In a letter dated 13 Aug. 1925 to Demetrio Barrios, Toledano sent his congratulations regarding the inauguration of a new highway that had been completed due to the 'zeal and initiatives of Barrios and [Demetrio Barrios], despite the apathy and continued opposition of the region's enemies of progress'.

59 AGN, O-C, 408-D-12, leg. 12.  
Letters dated 4 Feb. 1926 and 27 May 1926 from Tirado to the Presidencia.

60 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letter for October 1926.  
Toledano's communique dated 27 Oct. 1926 was relayed to Barrios in a letter from General Amaya.

61 BVL. Lombardo Toledano, V., 'Estructura Económica de la Sierra de Puebla. Teziutlán', in *La Revista Teziutlán*, (Teziutlán, 1928).

62 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Documents sent/received for August 1928.  
Letter dated 14 Aug. 1928 from the Ministry of War to Barrios.

63 AMT de O, Caja 53.  
*La Voz de la Sierra*, a propaganda magazine issued between 6 May 1928 and 24 June 1928, comprised 8 editions in which the *Liga Revolucionaria* set out its policies and candidates for Sierra elections.

64 Ibid., no. 8, p. 2.

65 For an analysis of labour representation in Mexico during this period see: Clark, M., *Organized Labor in Mexico*, (New York, 1934).

66 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1927. Letters for July 1927.  
On 20 July 1927 the *Jefatura* in Puebla made Barrios aware of a complaint from vecinos of Teziutlán claiming political interference by Barrios' troops. Barrios was instructed to order his troops 'not to meddle in any way in the resolution of municipal or union political conflicts that might arise'.

AGN, O-C, 427-B-1.  
On 24 Feb. 1928 representatives of the *Partidos "Plutarco Elias Calles"* and the *"Campesinos de la Sierra Norte"* of Pahuatlán, expressed their fears to Calles that a forthcoming political convention might be violently disrupted by Barrios forces.

ADN, C, 2-1145, f. 405.  
On 15 June 1928 a representative of the *Confederación Revolucionaria Socialista del Estado de Puebla* in Chignahuapan, alleged that Barrios forces were threatening the party's campaigners to ensure that Barrios candidates were imposed against the wishes of the people. The complaint listed the Barrios candidates benefiting from this intimidation: Abraham Lucas as senator, and Salustio Cabrera, Ricardo Márquez Galindo, José Sosa and Constantino Molina.

ADN, C, 2-1145, f. 408.  
On 13 July 1928 the *Partido Liberal Socialista Independiente Revolucionario del Puebla* informed the Gobernación that an electoral commission favourable to Barrios' candidate, J.L. Cardona, was being forced upon authorities in Huauchinango.

AMC, Caja 164, Gobernación, 14.  
On 24 June 1928 the *Confederación Revolucionaria Socialista* sent a circular to the municipal president in Cuetzalan stating that the *Jefe de Operaciones Militares* in Puebla had issued orders for all federal troops to stay out of political affairs, and that Barrios would be responsible for guaranteeing the protection of all serranos, irrespective of political allegiances. (The president of the executive council of the *Confederación* was José María Sánchez, *agrarista* and ex-governor of Puebla.)

*La Opinión*, 5 July 1928, no. 1533, p. 1.

Widespread military interference in the local authorities in Teziutlán was reported, with Elpidio Barrios (Barrios' half-brother) attempting forcibly to install an electoral commission that would confirm the selection of Barrios candidates. The ayuntamiento sought state government protection.

67 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Correspondence for 1928.

Letter dated 15 Feb. 1928 from Miguel Andréu Almazán to Barrios.

For other expressions of support and encouragement see letters dated:

15 Feb. 1928 from Pedro Lecona Soto; 16 Feb. 1926 from Miguel Angel Córtes, president of the *Comité pro-Obregón*, Tecamachalco, Pue; 20 Feb. 1926 from Roberto Tirado Gutiérrez; 21 Feb. 1926 from Arturo Viqueros; 20 April 1928 from the vecinos of Tlacuiletepec, Pue.

68 Details of the final political assault on the Barrios cacicazgo are to be found in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

## 5. Enlightened Cacique or Political Opportunist?

Cuacuila, the natal village of the Barrios brothers, enjoys commanding views in all directions of wooded mountain slopes. Only infrequently is this scene interrupted by the rising smoke of fires, revealing the existence of other small settlements lost within the Sierra. These are connected to Cuacuila, and Cuacuila with yet more villages beyond, by the same tracks that serranos have used for centuries to make journeys to the weekly markets of Tetela or Zacatlán. A more recently forged road makes it possible for robust vehicles to reach Cuacuila in good weather. Frequent heavy rainfall, however, causes landslides which wrest Cuacuila, and a hundred other Sierra villages, back to a former way of life; a life that could have almost existed during the days of the Revolution when Gabriel Barrios began his rise to regional supremacy.

Almost, but not quite: telegraph lines follow the contours of mountain slopes, connecting Cuacuila to the outside world. Just below the small clearing that serves as Cuacuila's public square, a school provides board and education for hundreds of children from the surrounding communities. Below, in the valleys that dissect this region of mountains, the rains no longer impede the passage of time. The federal government's *Solidaridad* campaign ensures a weekly supply of voluntary labour to maintain the drainage and irrigation channels which regulate erratic rainfall and ensure decent land for cultivation. Transport links allow local crops to reach a wider market than in the past. From the valley-head town of Tetela de Ocampo, a paved road leads to Chignahuapan, Zacatlán and beyond, allowing both produce and economic migrants to make the four hour trip to regional and national capitals with unprecedented ease. The stimulus behind this and other projects which opened large areas of the Sierra to the twentieth century, lay with one man; Gabriel Barrios, the '*indito*' from the small village on the hill.

As in other aspects, the issue of regional development again provokes comparison between Gabriel Barrios and his predecessor, Juan Francisco Lucas. As a prominent local businessman, Lucas was keen to develop communication links within the region and actively encouraged the construction of bridges, paths and schools, particularly in his native municipality of Xochiapulco. Ambitious plans to link the *altiplano* to the *tierra caliente* were drawn up but came to nothing. Lack of government investment, compounded by the inadequacy of private and municipal funds meant that many proposals remained on the drawing board. In sharing and elaborating his predecessor's interests in economic development, Gabriel Barrios acted in harmony with the prevailing political environment. During the 1920s, but particularly under the presidency of Calles, the federal government created and funded various agencies designed to repair and improve the economic infrastructure of the nation. By pre-empting such federal initiatives, Barrios was in a strong position to argue the case for federal support when competition for limited government resources became intense. His success in attracting such funds facilitated the extension of his network of clients, as it was he who decided which municipal authorities would be favoured with federal resources.

In the cabeceras, the commercial bourgeoisie was particularly sensitive to any plans that the cacique might propose. Their anxiety was not related merely to the consequences of such projects to their trade. For Barrios to bring major construction projects to fruition, he needed access to the labour force every bit as complete as he had enjoyed in relation to military recruitment. In certain areas, particularly the district of Zacapoaxtla, local elites who had traditionally controlled access to labour, viewed such projects as yet another example of Barrios' attempts to determine every aspect of serrano life. As will be argued in the following chapter, this aspect of the development programme went to the heart of regional power broking and fostered bitter conflict. Community leaders

were forced to decide whether their future interests were best served by co-operating or opposing Barrios' latest foray into spheres of influence previously monopolised by themselves.

For a while, Barrios' developmental initiatives made him something of a local revolutionary hero. Yet the enduring image of Barrios is that of a tyrannical cacique who abused his position to favour his family and friends. Certainly, there is no shortage of accusations to confirm this view of Barrios, yet is this picture accurate or distorted by political expediency? The efficiency and sustained energy that Barrios displayed in bringing his projects to fruition, suggests that he genuinely wished to improve the life of the campesino. This chapter explores the motives behind Barrios' interest in progress. Was there any correlation between Barrios' reform and broader political considerations? How was progress perceived and how can it be measured? In this predominantly Indian region, was the vision of progress of the city reformer shared by Nahua and Totonac campesinos?

An analysis of the motives and methods of Barrios' development policies in the Sierra reveals much about his cacicazgo: the nature and scope of its relationship with powers beyond the Sierra; how the cacicazgo developed the resources both to retain firm control and to extend its influence; how these projects fostered opposition from groups with diverse interests, whose only common ground was their shared determination to stop the Barrios family's relentless quest for regional domination.

### *Distributing spoils in post-revolutionary Mexico*

Calls for national reconciliation and reconstruction were nothing new in revolutionary Mexico. Successive dominant factions hoped that their tenure in power would lead to a normalisation of national politics and enable them to model society in the form they thought best. Alvaro Obregón was no exception:

In consideration of the fact that the armed struggle to free the country from the most ignominious of impositions has triumphed, and the director having been brought before the law, in order swiftly to establish law and order, it is a priority that all those countrymen who so spontaneously offered their services to the struggle should return to their peacetime activities. Included in their numbers should be the *Defensas Sociales*, who have given a great example of morality and patriotism by their unswerving loyalty to the cause. In recognition of which, military commanders and forces under their command will receive orders to issue certificates to each patriot so that he might forever possess a reminder of his honourable role in satisfying his rights and duties.<sup>1</sup>

Yet it would take more than a certificate on the wall to satisfy the raised expectations of the Mexican people. As Obregón's message highlights, success in meeting these aspirations depended upon establishing peace and stability. Economic necessity and suspicions regarding the fidelity of military leaders provoked a massive federal programme of military demobilisation. Yet, far from being a solution, demobilisation threatened to leave many loose cannons free to roll on deck. Vanquished and victors alike needed to be reassured as they laid down their arms. Moreover, the Constitution made many promises: land to those who needed it; protection and rights for industrial workers and a host of individual guarantees under a system of government which would be, in all aspects, democratic. To convince Mexicans that the Revolution had not deserted them, the federal government placed great emphasis on reaching and shaping the minds of the ordinary people. Propaganda and education were employed to foster a sense of national pride and to announce the dawning of a new era for a country that had suffered so much in the past.<sup>2</sup>

Turning rhetoric into tangible results proved to be beyond the purse of both federal and state governments. In 1920, Mexico's foreign debt had risen to 1000 million pesos and the economy had become increasingly reliant upon U.S. markets and loans from U.S. banks.<sup>3</sup> With the economic infrastructure of many regions severely damaged and surviving transport routes open to widespread banditry, Mexico was in a poor condition to create the wealth needed to sustain national redevelopment. Although the boom in oil prices did much to rescue the Mexican economy from total collapse, the U.S. government's refusal to recognise Obregón's administration, the danger of U.S. intervention, and the need to begin repaying the foreign debt, all combined to ensure that budgetary policy was moderate and prudent.<sup>4</sup> As a result, although the government recognised the need to rebuild the economic infrastructure, much needed projects were left still-born or stunted through inadequate investment.

Even when projects were implemented, there remained the thorny issue of overall authority. Federal road projects might link national centres of economic importance, but unless the state government could accompany such constructions with funding for tributary communications, the majority of Mexicans would remain marginalised. Overt pressure from the federal government upon the states to co-operate in such projects risked the accusation of federal encroachment upon state sovereignty. Similarly, federal education, one of the areas of real progress during the Obregón administration, followed a path across the same minefield. Mary Kay Vaughan shows how the primary responsibility for education fell upon individual states. Yet if federal finances had reduced to a trickle, in many cases state resources had long run dry. Aware of state sensibilities, José Vasconcelos, as head of the newly created Secretaría de Educación Pública, was called upon to use all his persuasive powers to convince state governments that the Ministry was not seeking to eclipse their educative role.<sup>5</sup>

National reconstruction, therefore, was fraught with local implications: measures to improve the economic infrastructure were tied by social and political considerations. Projects of national importance called for unity and co-ordination. In Puebla, where an absence of local political direction was aggravated by friction between federal and state administrations, the impulse for progress was, at best, sporadic and more commonly non-existent. A measure of what could be achieved, however, was found in the Sierra where the region's inhabitants enjoyed the political and social stability absent elsewhere. This very stability enabled the Sierra to witness a regional development programme unrivalled in the rest of the state.

### *The Aftermath of the Revolution in the Sierra*

Topography has always been a deterrent to modern communications in the Sierra.<sup>6</sup> While it was technically simple to run rail and road routes across the plains, once they reached the foothills of the Sierra, the flow of communications suffered stenosis. Around the edges of the Sierra, at Honey, Beristáin, Zaragoza and Chignahuapan, rail-tracks reached the end of the line. Similarly, federal roads connecting Mexico City and Puebla City to Chignahuapan petered out as the routes began to penetrate the Sierra. Mules replaced trucks and railway wagons as the means of transport and during the Revolution, using the narrow mountain tracks often exposed travellers to banditry. Telegraph lines that linked cabeceras and other important communities fell victim to repeated acts of sabotage, as opposing revolutionary forces sought to neutralise the tactical advantages that communications provided.<sup>7</sup>



Semblances of normal life did continue throughout the Revolution, though not without difficulty. Cabeceras experienced great problems collecting local taxes from recalcitrant communities, an indication of the lack of respect for local authority fostered by the disruption of civil war. In the district of Tetela, lack of community co-operation was apparent in various ways. While the local authorities had managed to keep almost all of its schools open during the Revolution, the fact that only 788 out of a total of 2547 registered school children attended these schools in 1919, indicated considerable resistance on the part of parents. Equally, the poor state of repair of the municipality's thoroughfares suggested a breakdown in community consensus. The municipal president reported that vecinos refused to resume the practice of *faenas*, arguing that the Constitution now protected them from performing such duties. With no funds to pay for either materials or labour, he warned that local authorities were struggling to keep thoroughfares open.<sup>8</sup>

Local authorities throughout the Sierra experienced similar difficulties in gaining the co-operation of vecinos in projects of common benefit.<sup>9</sup> As the municipal president of Tetela de Ocampo reported, resistance came from a population which had been fed on a political diet of civil liberties and equality before the law. Many had made personal sacrifices in a struggle which, they were told, aimed to uphold and respect their rights under the Constitution. Once the Revolution was over, objections arose concerning the reimposition of onerous tasks that impinged upon these constitutional guarantees. Such sentiments may have been a symptom of the frustration felt by a serrano population finding it difficult to accept a post-revolutionary reality in which little material change had occurred and where paths still needed to be maintained.

This dilemma was exacerbated by a lack of state finance. In December 1919, the Cabrera administration in Puebla City issued a circular to all local

authorities urging them to improve communications deemed essential to regional economic recovery. To encourage the initiative, the state appointed an Inspector of Roads to collate data regarding the condition of Puebla's roads and thoroughfares. Days after the circular had been issued, the Tetela authorities received a letter from the state government expressing regret that, due to lack of funds, construction of a path linking Tetela to Totutla would have to be postponed. Until the financial situation improved, the municipal president was urged to encourage the vecinos of his area to lend their voluntary support towards the maintenance of paths.<sup>10</sup>

If friction existed between serrano citizens, particularly over the issue of *faenas*, the region was generally blessed by peace with regards to the labour and agrarian conflict. Pastor Rouaix noted in 1920:

[...] The Sierra Norte del Estado finds itself in exceptional circumstances: there is no agrarian problem within the region and the conditions of the workers differ completely from those of the rest of the State since one can observe a large measure of economic independence [...].<sup>11</sup>

Apart from small-scale mining operations in Tetela and Teziutlán, there were no other industrial activities, while the basis of the economic independence among campesinos was explained by Miguel Lucas:

In this municipality and, perhaps, throughout the Sierra Norte de Puebla, the agrarian problem which has served as a revolutionary banner for the people of other regions, does not exist. Here, there are no large estates, there are no enemies of the small holder, this is because in the past, whenever possible, the land has been divided and granted to serranos in small plots. Here in the Sierra, virtually all heads of families own their own plot of land which, if they tend it carefully, will provide them with sufficient for the needs of themselves and their families. If they are poor it is because they produce no more than is strictly necessary to survive.<sup>12</sup>

While Barrios remained within the Sierra, he was never forced to take sides on the agrarian issue. The situation changed when the cacicazgo outgrew

its region of origin and pushed out onto the *altiplano*. Barrios' own response to the agrarian issue and the degree to which he was implicated in pre-existing local agrarian frictions will be analysed later in the chapter. At this point, it is important merely to indicate that no matter what other hurdles Barrios had to confront, he was unlikely to be distracted by any appreciable agrarian conflict.

### *Communication improvements in the Sierra*

Given the extent of the financial problems and the prevailing lack of respect for civil authority, 1920 was not a propitious time to launch an ambitious programme of regional regeneration in the Sierra. Yet it was at this precise moment that Barrios made his first move towards the establishment of a development programme which would earn national acclaim.

The problems experienced by local authorities in getting vecinos to maintain and improve communication routes did not mean that the Sierra lacked men of vision who shared Barrios' desire to make the region more accessible. Both commercial and ideological considerations encouraged local figures to fight against the seeming lethargy of their fellow serranos. Yet the threat of change provoked opposition from a variety of sources. The most articulate in voicing their objections were the leaders of mestizo communities who, despite the revolutionary turmoil, had retained their monopoly of local trade and saw Barrios' plans as a direct threat. As will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, the elite of Zacapoaxtla had feared that a nearby federal road project would marginalise their town's trade. Since colonial times, Zacapoaxtla had flourished as a commercial intermediary between serrano communities and the outside world. With no economic resource of its own, a road further into the

Sierra threatened to rob Zacapoaxtla of its life-blood as the central Sierra's main market town.

In combating such opposition, there were two main lines of attack. One relied upon Barrios' considerable potential to coerce reticent serranos and reward more pliable individuals. The second took the form of a propaganda crusade against the 'ignorance and isolation that had prolonged the suffering and exploitation of serrano campesinos'. This second line of attack was extremely important. All progressive revolutionary forces - politicians, intellectuals and academics were summoned to a war to reverse economic stagnation and vanquish the forces of reaction and tradition. Those who opposed Barrios would have to find a means of sidestepping the inevitable accusation of being counter-revolutionary. Once recruited, the 'good men of progress' who backed Barrios' initiatives lent legitimacy to his other available options; the use of coercion and patronage.

From the early stages of Barrios' economic development programme in the Sierra, he was able to rely upon the support and counsel of his loyal friend, and local intellectual, Demetrio Santa Fe. Santa Fe's influence has already been noted: Barrios' network of *jefes de armas* had been modelled in part on Santa Fe's thoughts on the responsibilities and duties of civil guards. Santa Fe had expressed his deep concern regarding the lawlessness and low morale of his fellow serranos in a letter to Abraham Lucas in July 1917 and placed much hope upon the state government's promise to promote, 'agriculture, roads, schools, bread, trade, and liberty [from] contribution'.<sup>13</sup> As projects were introduced, other serrano intellectuals joined Santa Fe's efforts to prevent the forces of progress being deflected from their mission by 'unscrupulous individuals who wished to prolong the exploitation of their fellow serranos'.<sup>14</sup>

If there was no shortage of mestizo men of progress within the Sierra, the question arises why an Indian soldier with faltering Spanish succeeded where more eloquent intellectuals failed? Nothing in Gabriel Barrios' past had suggested an interest in regional development: his family were, first and foremost, farmers who made a living from supplying local markets with horses and agricultural produce. It was only during the early years of his military career that Barrios became concerned with communications, appreciating that an army with first-hand knowledge of well-maintained mountain paths could use them to gain a vital edge over their opponents.<sup>15</sup> It is this military aspect of communications, perhaps, which made Barrios' demands more compelling than the pleadings of civilians such as Santa Fe. In an atmosphere of revolutionary turmoil, measures to improve military efficiency proved particularly persuasive.

The full extent of Barrios' contribution towards the Sierra's communications network was evident in a federal government report compiled a decade later. The report provided details of the results of collaboration between the 46th. Battalion and the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas (SCOP):

- 1) Completion of National Highway from Mexico to Tuxpan. (via Tulancingo-Beristáin-Huauchinango-Necaxa-Villa Juárez-Agua Fría-Tuxpan)
- 2) Partial completion of National Highway from Mexico to Tecolutla. (via Apan, Hidalgo-Atotonilco-Chignahuapan-Tenango-Huehuetla-Coxquihui-El Espinal-Papantla-Tecolutla)
- 3) Partial completion of National Highway from Mexico to Tecolutla. (via Chignahuapan-Aquixtla-Tetela de Ocampo-Huahuaxtla to Apulco, where it joined the Oriental to Tecolutla road)
- 4) Partial completion of National Highway from Oriental to Tecolutla. (via Oriental-Libres-Zaragoza-Zacapoaxtla-Apulco-Papantla-Tecolutla)
- 5) Partial completion of National Highway from Oriental to Nautla. (via Oyamales-Teziutlán-Martínez de la Torre-Jicaltepec-Nautla)
- 6) Trans-Sierra State Highway from Tulancingo to Jalapa, Veracruz. (via Tulancingo-Zacatlán-Chignahuapan-Tetela de Ocampo-Huahuaxtla-Zaragoza-Tlatlauquitepec-Teziutlán-Perote-Jalapa)
- 7) State Highway from Aquixtla to Cuyuaco.

Total distance accessible by car - over 1000 km.  
 Cost of road projects - \$46,000.

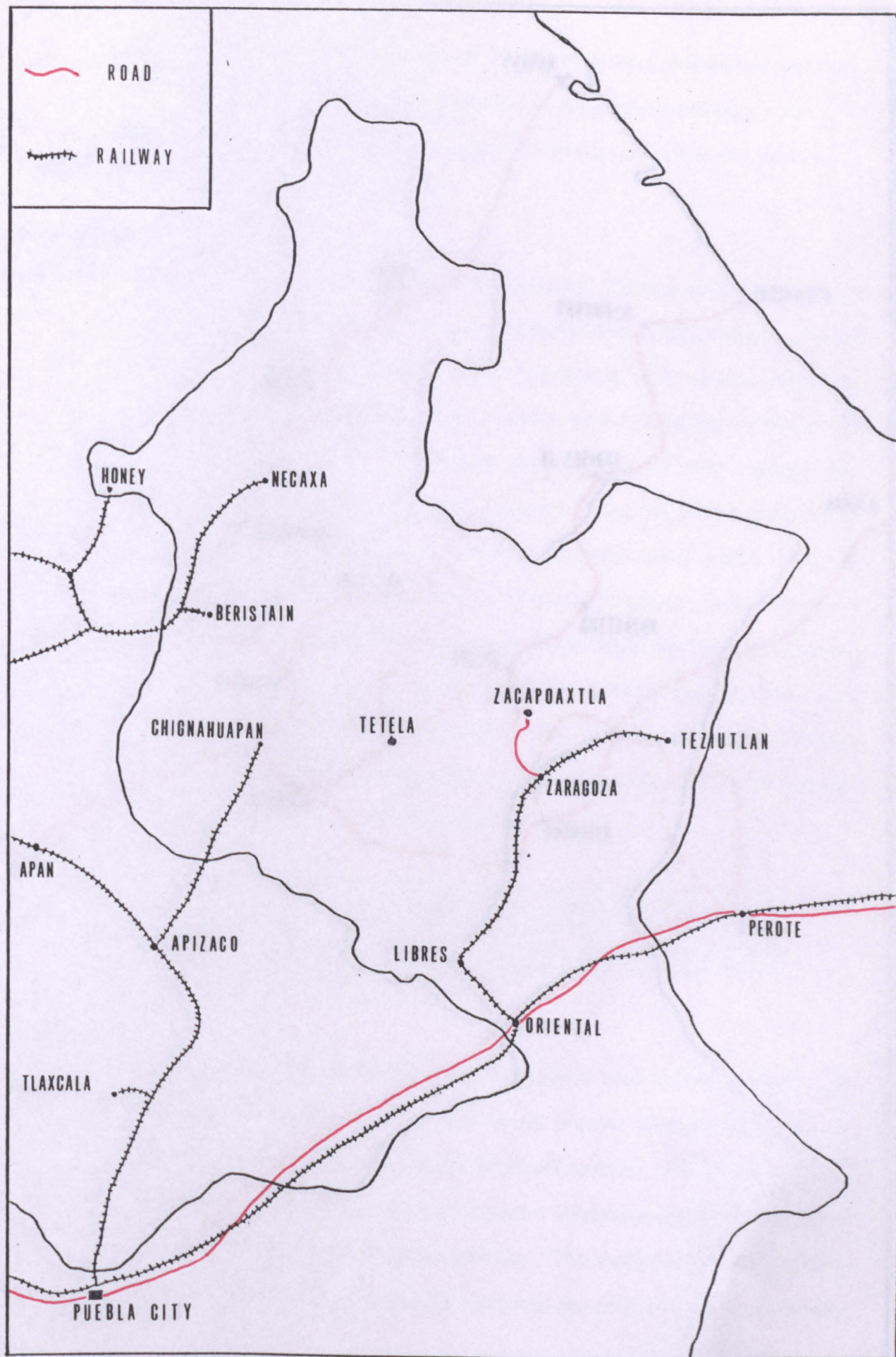
The 46th. Battalion has helped to erect over 2000 km of telephone lines. There are over 500 offices within the Sierra, meaning that every significant community in the region is in contact with the outside world.<sup>16</sup>

In understanding why Barrios was successful in attracting federal sponsorship, one must recall that Obregón had allowed Barrios to remain in the Sierra for one prime reason; to stabilise and control the region and return it to peaceful civilian life. As Barrios' superior officers assured the Ministry of War, the proposed projects were:

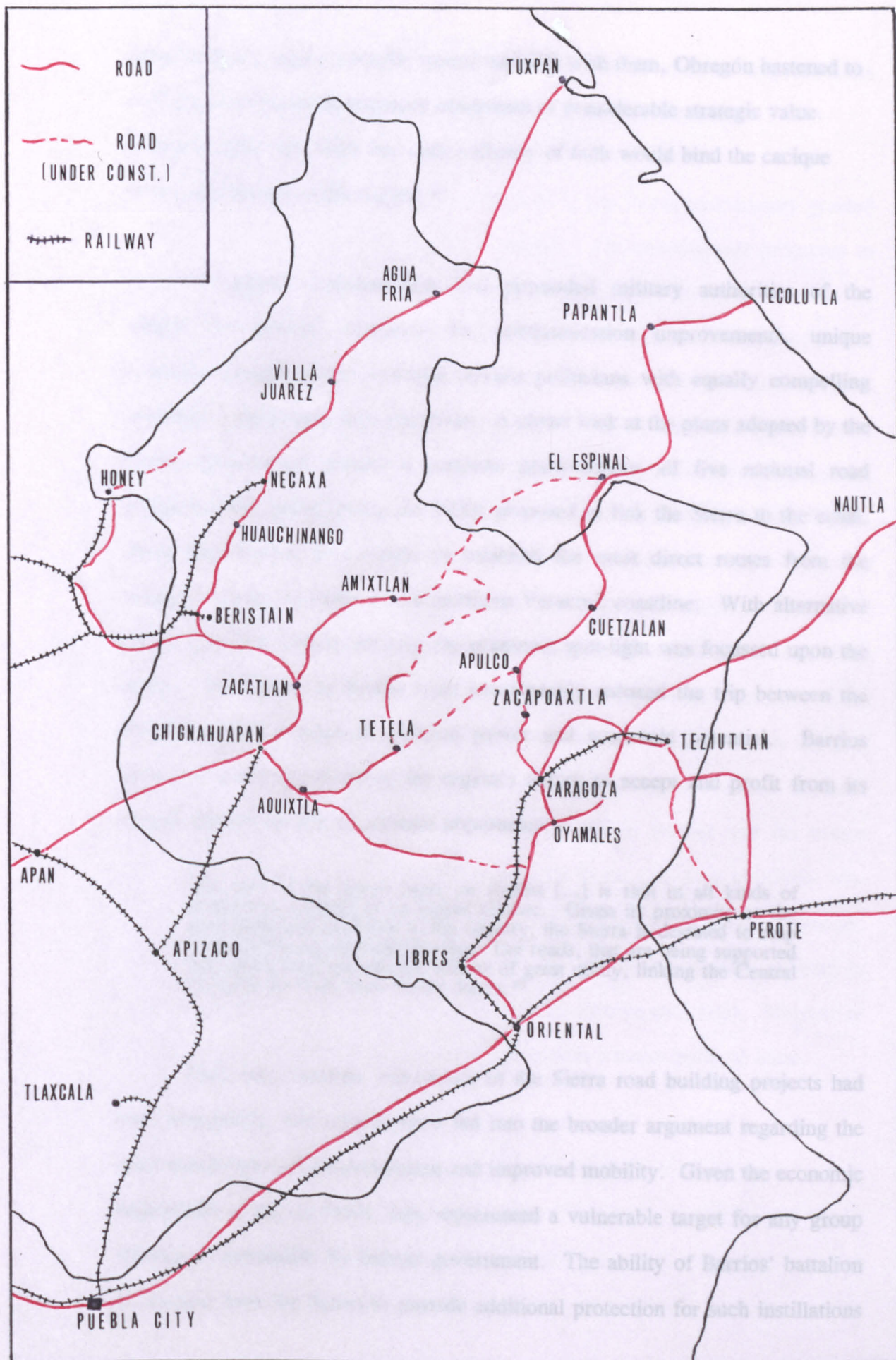
[...] Of military urgency, since the most severe disadvantages that the troops encountered in their recent campaign, were due to the poor state of the thoroughfares, where the infantry were forced to discard their boots after only one day's walking and where horses were useless in all but the shortest reconnaissance trips.<sup>17</sup>

While the threat of rebellion fluctuated throughout the 1920s, the underlying atmosphere of instability remained a vital additional lever to prise funds from federal coffers.<sup>18</sup> Just as the Sierra's location had contributed towards its political significance during the nineteenth century, it was essential that this strategically important region of the state of Puebla should remain as stable as possible during the uncertain years that followed the Revolution.

The sources of such instability were never far away. During Carranza's presidency, various Villista groups had threatened the government's hold over the Sierra and these same groups continued to cause problems under Obregón's administration. In many cases indistinguishable from the highway bandits that plagued the Sierra, Villistas-turned-Delahuertistas preyed upon commercial transport routes throughout the mountainous region and the *tierra cálida* of Veracruz. By 1923 Obregón was convinced both of the merit of the security argument and of Barrios' fidelity. While formerly loyal officers turned to the









Delahuertistas, taking valuable federal supplies with them, Obregón hastened to send Barrios telecommunications equipment of considerable strategic value. Obregón could only hope that such a display of faith would bind the cacique even more closely to the regime.<sup>19</sup>

If security considerations had persuaded military authorities of the validity of Barrios' argument for communication improvements, unique economic considerations provided serrano politicians with equally compelling reasons for supporting such initiatives. A closer look at the plans adopted by the federal government reveals a common phenomenon: all five national road projects in the Sierra during the 1920s proposed to link the Sierra to the coast. More specifically, they sought to establish the most direct routes from the *altiplano* to the oil-fields on the northern Veracruz coastline. With alternative routes requiring lengthy detours, the economic spot-light was focussed upon the Sierra. The Sierra de Puebla route considerably reduced the trip between the most important centres of political power and economic potential. Barrios spared no effort in affirming the region's ability to accept and profit from its unique role in this task of national importance:

The area of the Sierra Norte de Puebla [...] is rich in all kinds of produce as a result of its humid climate. Given its proximity to the most important oil-fields in the country, the Sierra is destined to reap considerable commercial benefits. The roads, that are being supported with great local enthusiasm, will be of great utility, linking the Central Plains to the Gulf coast via the Sierra.<sup>20</sup>

Once the economic importance of the Sierra road building projects had been recognised, this consideration fed into the broader argument regarding the relationship between peace-keeping and improved mobility. Given the economic importance of the oil-fields, they represented a vulnerable target for any group wishing to destabilise the federal government. The ability of Barrios' battalion to descend from the Sierra to provide additional protection for such instillations

merely strengthened the argument that Sierra communication improvements deserved moral and material support from the federal government.

The prospect of an economic bonanza in the Sierra was warmly greeted by successive impoverished state governments. The development proposals in the Sierra captured the attention of regional newspapers and they were in no doubt where the responsibility lay for ensuring that Barrios received sufficient support. An editorial in *El Monitor* stated that if it was agreed that such projects would produce commercial and financial benefits for the state of Puebla, then it was incumbent upon those who stood to benefit most from such projects to foot the bill. The paper suggested that half of the costs should be found from government finances and the other half shared between the road user, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Centre for Mexican Industry.<sup>21</sup> There is little evidence to suggest that the state government and Puebla City business interests ever responded positively to such pressure. Indeed, when Tirado assumed the governorship, he did everything he could to impede Barrios' plans for the Sierra. However, Tirado was careful not to criticise the road building projects directly, only the manner in which Barrios and his troops conducted such projects. He could not afford to be cast as a politician who blocked the kind of initiatives that his federal patrons were keen to promote. Tirado's line of attack is significant in that he, and later Toledano, pointed to excessive *faenas* as a symbol of the abuses of the Barrios cacicazgo. Whether or not such criticisms were fair, the use of *faenas* was a major political issue.

*Faenas: Forced Labour or Solidaridad?*

Even if the prospect of regional stability and economic growth were insufficient to convince the authorities that Barrios' plans were worthy of special consideration, an additional factor was almost certain to swing the decision in his favour. *El Monitor* had spoken in general terms of the widespread enthusiasm for such projects. Two years later, the military report that arrived on Obregón's desk was less ambiguous:

Given the overwhelming enthusiasm with which the serrano communities are willing to construct these roads, I judge that it would be necessary for the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas to provide nothing more than technical advice and equipment. Furthermore, much of this equipment already exists in the Sierra, having been provided for road construction projects that were subsequently suspended.<sup>22</sup>

The inference of this report, and one that Barrios did much to encourage, was that these vitally important projects could be completed without incurring excessive costs. Past projects had failed, primarily, due to lack of finance. With minimal capital outlay, Barrios was offering to turn his mastery of communications for military purposes towards civil construction projects. His fundamental philosophy was self-help. As the economic and social benefits of road projects would reach all serranos, it was incumbent upon all serranos to work together and reap common reward from common toil. The vital elements of co-ordination and administration that serranos lacked, following the demise of state and municipal government authority, would be provided by Barrios' military organisation.

The obvious counter-argument to Barrios' presumption of the enthusiasm of his fellow serranos, was repeatedly expressed by Tirado, and decisively stated by Toledano at the Puebla Labour Conference in 1928. Barrios was not harnessing the voluntary will of the people, they alleged, but was merely

manipulating the tradition of *faenas* to impose a system of forced labour throughout the Sierra. Yet, this intellectual who waxed lyrical about desecrated pre-Columbian traditions to a receptive Labour Conference, was the same Toledano who, several years earlier, had been anxious to associate with the cacique. Then, Toledano had acknowledged Barrios' resourcefulness and had heaped praise upon initiatives which, he assured, would bring benefits to all serranos.

The inescapable fact was that, given the importance of the projects proposed, neither government nor left-wing intellectuals were too concerned about the minor details of labour recruitment. While labour reform may have been on the political agenda in the cities, in the early 1920s few questioned too deeply the voluntary status of the custom of *faenas* in the Sierra. Indeed, on more than one occasion, Obregón was able to take refuge in the very ambiguity of this ancient institution:

According to our Constitution, no-one is obliged to give their personal services without fair payment; but, in my role as President, it is my duty to foster within people a sense in which they might wish to give their spontaneous co-operation, expressed through modest quotas of work, towards projects of public interest and collective benefit.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that the attraction of low labour costs was sufficient to sap the political will of those who purported to uphold the spirit of the Constitution. On more than one occasion, Barrios was accused of defrauding the government by pocketing funds allocated for wages and using *faenas* to complete the same tasks. However, internal government reports show that authorities had already assumed the use of *faenas* in assessing the total costs of the developments, and there is no evidence to suggest that government funds expended upon the projects bore a significant element of labour cost.

The burning question, however, was how Barrios could capture the alleged enthusiasm for development when so many local authorities had failed? Certainly, many communities had continued to organise themselves in order to maintain local paths, but the prospect of returning to a system of regular *faenas* was greeted with mixed feelings. The number of documented cases where communities tried to resist Barrios' efforts to reimpose regular *faenas* is small. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the only evidence of sustained opposition to *faenas* came from the district of Zacapoaxtla, where evidence suggests that this was due more to political rivalries rather than community obstinacy. In other regions, evidence of resistance is erratic, lacking any discernible pattern. In May 1924, for example, local authorities in Hueytenantan asked the municipal president in Tetela de Ocampo for advice on how to proceed against individuals who refused to do *faenas* or pay the consequent fine.<sup>24</sup> In March 1926, the local judge in Tlatempa, Zacatlán asked Demetrio Barrios to send five soldiers to ensure that certain vecinos honoured their *faena* commitments.<sup>25</sup> Resistance to *faenas* generally involved individuals or small groups rather than entire communities.

Reasons for resisting *faenas* varied. Some communities, like the *barrio* of Yautetelco, Xochiapulco, complained against excessive *faenas*. They accused the local judge of demanding that each of them carry large stone the distance of one kilometre to the site of a bridge construction. Each person was to make five trips a day and unlike the customary weekly *faenas*, the judge insisted that these tasks be performed on several days of the week.<sup>26</sup> Others objected on constitutional grounds, like Rivera Márquez, an opposition candidate in local elections in the community of Coyutla. He was accused of having stood outside the municipal palace and shouted: 'I wish to help the poor people [of Coyutla] and they should know that *faenas* no longer exist as they are prohibited by the law.'<sup>27</sup> Yet the evidence suggests that few communities sustained the type of

argument that Márquez put forward, the majority eventually recognising the need to maintain local paths. Many of the objections related to *faenas* for road construction projects that were located up to a day's walk from their homes. They argued that such projects were of no benefit to them and were constructed to satisfy the interests of the traders through whose towns the road would pass.

This objection raises the largely subjective issue of the nature of benefits derived from regional communications development. For Barrios the issue seemed clear. Improved transport gave all *serranos* the indirect benefit of increased trade outlets for locally grown produce. The counter-argument was that the benefits from communication improvements went no further than the mestizo trader in the *cabeceras* who acted as an exploitative intermediary between producer and lucrative markets. Whichever argument held the most merit, and this depended from one locality to another, road constructions forced Indian communities to re-evaluate their cultural, social and economic links with the mestizo world beyond.

Anthropological studies confirm that many Indian communities possessed the ability to adapt their culture to make allowances for the changing circumstances that surrounded them. In the district of Zacapoaxtla, individual families and entire communities strengthened their economic position by forming special ties, of *compadrazgo* for instance, with particular mestizos in the *cabecera*.<sup>28</sup> Given that such arrangements were possible, Barrios' argument that all *serranos* stood to gain from better communications clearly had some merit. New roads, through improving the commerce of a *cabecera*, would facilitate a reciprocation of benefits between mestizo and Indian.

In other communities, such as Eloxochitlán, (Zacatlán), research reveals a much less harmonious reaction to perceived forces of change. Any degree of

external interference was seen as a threat to the very culture that helped to unite the community.<sup>29</sup> Yet there is no evidence that the vecinos of Eloxochitlán ever resisted *faena* demands, even though the national highway project from Mexico City to Tuxpan passed near to their village. Indeed, the low incident of opposition to *faenas* throughout the 1920s suggests that Barrios was able to reach some form of compromise with serrano communities which ensured *faena* compliance while not impinging upon community authority to an extent that might provoke a more widespread reaction. In the following chapter, evidence from the district of Zacapoaxtla suggests that Gabriel Barrios' Indian background may have provided him with the understanding needed to reach this compromise.

Cultural considerations aside, the criticism that Barrios' use of *faenas* was tantamount to exploitation of the weak was clearly a sensitive issue in post-revolutionary Mexico. Traditionally, *faenas* had been an obligation placed upon poorer serranos, who almost inevitably tended to be Indians. The reintroduction of *faenas* produced an awkward dilemma: if such obligations were seen to be restricted to certain ethnic and social groups, it would be even more difficult for the federal government to sidestep constitutional objections.

Partly to resolve this dilemma, Barrios took great care to demonstrate that *faenas* were the obligation of all serranos, irrespective of class or colour; an approach which sat more comfortably within the constitutional framework. Barrios accepted the logic that, given the common benefit to all serranos, it was only fair that all serranos should do *faenas*. This opinion had been expressed by Barrios' adviser, Demetrio Santa Fe, as early as 1913:

Without delay, [the *jefes políticos*] should abolish the unjust custom of *Topiles* that is common in Indian villages, and force local authorities to replace it with a service which will incorporate all members of a community irrespective of race or social class.<sup>30</sup>

While it would be too extreme to suggest that master and servant worked side by side in solidarity, it does appear that a large measure of success was obtained in ensuring that all *serranos* were seen to be contributing towards the community effort. In the case of traders and other individuals whose businesses would have been harmed by *faena* attendance, a system of fines was imposed to pay a labourer to do the absentee's quota of work. Not infrequently, wealthier members of a community were persuaded to make additional contributions of money and materials to sustain the local effort.

*Faena* obligations called for no wholesale inversion of the social order. More prominent members of a community would be assigned supervisory roles, while in other cases, servants would take the place of their employer. Yet even these demands were enough to foster resentment among local elites. Those who objected to the *cacique's* demands were frequently the same groups who counted among Barrios' political opponents. Added to their number were the various rural communities who, for one reason or another, found Barrios' demands unacceptable. In Zacapoaxtla, this led to an unholy alliance between Indian and mestizos with nothing in common but their opposition to Barrios.

Bearing in mind the popularity of Barrios' development initiatives among federal and state governments, objections to his projects had to be couched in terms that would not be interpreted as anti-progressive. Like Tirado, opponents to the road projects tended to concentrate more upon the excessive brutality used by Barrios' forces to ensure compliance with *faena* duties, rather than the *faenas* themselves. Official responses to these frequent charges provide an accurate indicator of the varying fortunes of the *cacicazgo*. While Barrios remained in favour, accusations of abuses would fall upon deaf ears: when Barrios was ousted, these same allegations were used as a prime factor in his removal.



While the presence of Barrios' men during *faenas* attracted much criticism, the benefits outweighed such considerations. The need to ensure fairness and full compliance with *faena* duties provided Barrios with an innocent facade behind which he could expand his military jurisdiction. Civil engineering on the scale undertaken in the Sierra called for a massive organisation of human and physical resources. For as long as these endeavours were hampered by community intransigence, political agitation and the threat of attack by bandits, it was essential that security be provided. In the earlier days of the cacicazgo, and periodically throughout the 1920s, Barrios' federal forces were deployed to assume such duties. As the network of *cuerpos voluntarios* grew, *jefes de armas* assumed local responsibility for the operation of nearby projects. Whether by using federal troops or *cuerpos voluntarios*, Barrios' military potential was able to extend beyond the Sierra in the name of revolutionary progress. In this way, detachments of the 46th. Battalion operated in regions beyond their military jurisdiction, crossing state frontiers at will. Barrios was thus able to expand the cacicazgo without arousing the suspicions of anyone other than those local opposition groups who saw their own influence eclipsed.

There was, however, a risk attached to Barrios' expansionist methods. As the road-building projects expanded, so Barrios became less able to control the cacicazgo with reliable, disciplined forces. In order to keep pace with the swift geographic expansion of the cacicazgo, compromises were made in the recruitment of *cuerpos voluntarios*. While road and telecommunication links helped Barrios keep abreast of local developments, the strict discipline that Barrios infused among his federal troops was more difficult to maintain further afield. Nonetheless, Barrios remained answerable for the actions of these groups and this provided a soft under-belly which political opponents could attack. The inevitable tension that occasionally arose as *jefes de armas* strove to

ensure *faena* compliance was a rallying point for all those opposed to Barrios' rule. Accusations ranged from rough man-handling, false imprisonment and intimidation, to the widescale lynching of those who refused to comply with *faena* demands. Accounts of the hanging of intransigents are, almost certainly, over-stated: coercion usually took a less extreme form. Yet, the possibility existed that *jefes de armas* might commit atrocities that, for example, related to factional disputes rather than resistance to *faenas*. Rivera Márquez of Coyutla, who it will be remembered had sought to make political capital by declaring *faenas* to be illegal, was later arrested by local officials accompanied by 15 men from the local *cuerpo voluntario*. While being conducted to the proper authorities, 'he gave resistance and was killed in the resultant struggle'.<sup>31</sup> The *ley fuga* appeared to operate efficiently in ridding the Sierra of political rivals.

Despite the rapid geographic expansion of communications under Barrios, the economic optimism with which his initiatives had been greeted disappeared with his removal from the region. Lacking a dominant driving force for change, much of the Sierra became marginalised. Under the auspices of the Avila Camacho family, government investment was diverted towards the eastern Sierra. The road link between the state capital and the Veracruz coast was shifted to pass through the Avila Camacho home district of Teziutlán; the surveyed and excavated routes that had promised so much in the past were allowed to deteriorate to the point of disuse. Only in more recent times have Barrios' roads been re-adopted by the federal government, helping to give a boost to places like Cuetzalan, now a prospering tourist centre.

*Campesinos and Agrarian Reform*

Despite the rapid expansion of the road network in the 1920s, the Sierra failed to display the expected economic diversification. Although mining in the Sierra retained its historical presence, it never became a major economic consideration. The mines did, however, prove to have political values; following the 1928 disaster at La Aurora copper mine in Teziutlán which claimed the lives of over 100 men, the local mining unions, backed by Lombardo Toledano, launched strong protests against dangerous working conditions. Accusing Barrios of siding with the mine owners, Toledano found popular backing for his portrayal of Barrios as anti-union, and an exploiter of the serrano.<sup>32</sup> The prospect of renewed foreign investment in mining faded when a North American consortium decided that the control Barrios and Abraham Lucas enjoyed over the Sierra made profitable investment unlikely. The consortium's objections probably had as much to do with the fact that Lucas was a competitor in the mining industry as with the form of regional control that Barrios possessed.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the regional economy remained as it had always been, based upon commerce and agriculture.

Barrios was well qualified to appreciate the needs of the serrano campesino. Despite his flourishing military career, he remained, first and foremost, an Indian ranchero with a lifetime of experience in the rearing of livestock and an awareness of the special challenges presented by the climate and soils of the Sierra.

Guided by his philosophy of self-help, Barrios put pressure on local communities to organise projects that would alleviate some of the indignities of subsistence living. His approach was simple: road construction efforts had identified and stimulated the more ambitious sectors of a given community.

Barrios used this enthusiasm as a catalyst for continued public works, such as irrigation, canalisation of drinking water and the laying of sewerage pipes. Local neighbourhood committees were set up to co-ordinate plans, petition for government support, and to ensure successful completion of the projects. Although Barrios rarely become personally involved in these schemes, few committees failed to seek his moral as well as material support. As the road construction project passed through Libres, for example, the newly formed 'Libres Committee for Sanitation' proposed to make Barrios honorary secretary in recognition of his efforts in encouraging the provision of local water supplies and sewerage systems. No doubt the committee's motives were partly swayed by the desire to harness the practical help of a man who, two years earlier, had been able to use his connections in the federal congress to secure \$5000 for a similar project in the Tetela area.<sup>34</sup>

Not surprisingly, perhaps, the most ambitious irrigation project of its kind took place in the valleys below Barrios' home village, Cuacuila. As early as 1917, a blue-print for irrigation and the provision of drinking water had been adopted. As local military commander, Barrios organised the construction of an aqueduct to convey water from the Barranca Fría to Tetela de Ocampo and outlying communities. The costs of the materials were provided by Barrios, Demetrio Santa Fe and the Tetela local authority, while *faenas* were organised to provide labour.<sup>35</sup> In the years that followed, a more ambitious project was undertaken. During the construction of the Chignahuapan to Tetela de Ocampo road, Barrios set his troops to work on an irrigation canal that would eventually improve the agricultural potential of the whole area.

In a truly outstanding feat of civil engineering, Barrios' federal troops were lowered over the side of the precipitous canyon where, suspended by ropes, they began the arduous task of cutting a water channel into the rock face.

*Faeneros* later took over the excavations, several losing their lives before the task was completed. The successful conclusion of the project transformed the agricultural potential of the Tetela region. Light soils, that seasonally suffered weather erosion, were converted into land where planned cultivation based upon controlled irrigation could be sustained. Campesinos obtained a measure of protection from the vagaries of the Sierra climate that, in the past, had caused true hardship.<sup>36</sup>

The fact that Barrios owned a considerable amount of land in these valleys invites the observation that such projects were personally motivated; measures designed to boost the value of his property. Yet, as Miguel Lucas had pointed in 1919, the Tetela region was characterised by small holdings. Much of the land formerly held by the descendants of Juan Francisco Lucas and Juan N. Méndez had been divided and sold to employees and neighbours; Barrios and his brothers were among the many purchasers.<sup>37</sup> Agricultural improvement for Barrios, meant agricultural improvement for all his neighbours.<sup>38</sup>

In another development, following a personal plea to Obregón, Barrios was able to acquire 100 ploughs from the federal government. In line with the revolutionary desire for all campesinos to play their part in rebuilding the fortunes of the Republic, the donation was given, as Obregón stated, 'as a small gift from the nation'.<sup>39</sup> A gift from the nation, perhaps, but no lucky recipient of a plough was in any doubt that it was Barrios who had obtained the gift and it was Barrios who held the final decision regarding who should benefit. Many of the grateful recipients were those who had seen improvements in their land as a result of the recent irrigation project.

Other initiatives followed. In August 1925, Ubalde Barrios, a cousin and serving officer of the Barrios brothers, joined forces with the *jefe de armas*

in Villa Juárez in organising a community project to convert a discarded ranch into a self-sufficient rural community. A *junta agrícola* was formed and *faenas* were used to bring the project to a successful conclusion.<sup>40</sup> With the cooperation of the *Dirección General de Agricultura y Ganadería*, Barrios promoted initiatives to improve farming techniques within the Sierra and used his network of *jefes de armas* to establish forestry brigades throughout the region. In Libres, the local *Unión de Obreros y Campesinos* was fully supportive of a proposal by Barrios that *faenas* should be used to renovate and repair the property of local ejidal and neighbouring farm land.<sup>41</sup>

Again reflecting the federal government's desire to establish a stable agricultural base, Barrios launched an initiative that altered the Sierra landscape. Passing through the Sierra today, it is noticeable that wherever one sees a rural domestic property, a small orchard is rarely far away. In order to supplement the serrano diet, Barrios impressed upon his fellow campesinos the need to plant fruit trees. Excess produce was sold or bartered at local markets to provide a valuable addition to a family's income. Ayuntamientos took up the challenge: in Libres directives were issued that all households should, without fail, plant a minimum of five fruit trees within a period of ten days.<sup>42</sup> For his part, Barrios rarely lost the opportunity of emphasising the abundant agricultural potential of the Sierra. Barrios' representatives in Mexico City delivered numerous boxes of locally produced apples, oranges, and fruit juice to the president and senior military and political officers.<sup>43</sup> As late as 1930, just weeks before the battalion's removal from the Sierra, Demetrio Barrios attended local committee meetings near Zacatlán to develop co-operative agricultural projects that would raise funds for local education and the implementation of improved farming techniques.<sup>44</sup>

In light of this range of initiatives aimed at improving the life of the campesino, it appears strange that Barrios should be portrayed as the campesino's enemy. That Barrios was aware of this image is evident from his instruction to Ricardo Márquez Galindo that he should go to the *Comisión Nacional Agraria*, 'in order to dispel the bad feeling that our enemies have created'.<sup>45</sup> Despite his initiatives to help the campesino, many of the complaints against Barrios troops, especially in the later years of his time in the Sierra, were voiced by local and regional representatives of agrarian commissions.

Barrios' support for agrarian improvement, yet apparent hostility to agrarian reform, leaves open the possibility that he was not the enemy of the campesino, only of the *agrarista*. Even though Barrios had personally benefited from the subdivision of larger estates, José María Barrios believes that his father's anti-agrarianism was due to a belief that such divisions left the campesino with an inadequate amount of poor quality land with which to support his family. Barrios thought that this led to a more, not less, vulnerable and dependent campesino population. Following this argument through, the reform measures promoted by Barrios could be seen as an attempt to defray some of the negative side-effects of well intentioned land reform; to make the serrano campesino as independent as possible, given that the Sierra had already been divided into small, poor quality plots of land.

Barrios' sons also suggest a political motive for their father's anti-agrarian stance. They state that their father believed that the local agrarian commission, far from being the friend of the campesino, was interested solely in the accumulation of power and influence. With local committees wielding the power to grant and take away ejido land, Barrios believed that agrarian reform was in danger of creating a nation of local caciques whose influence depended upon the patronage of regional and federal agrarian commissions. In this light,

Barrios' anti-agrarian stance could be seen in much the same way as his clashes with Tirado and local rival factions: a struggle for regional domination.

Given the pre-existing composition of land tenure in much of the Sierra, Barrios' views on land reform were not an immediate bone of contention. Beyond the Sierra, however, surviving haciendas became a focal point for local discontent. Inevitably, Barrios became embroiled in these localised disputes once his influence encroached upon the areas in question.

Judging Barrios' actions against *agraristas* is complicated by the dual role that he was expected to play. As local military commander of a region with no effective civilian law enforcement, Barrios was obliged to intervene in agrarian friction in order to keep regional stability. On more than one occasion, his military superiors ordered him to take action to quell what was seen as an agrarian rebellion.<sup>46</sup> Such intervention often resulted in a compromise that pleased no-one and that portrayed Barrios as the main offender. Yet, on these occasions, it is difficult to isolate the extent to which Barrios was acting to further his personal ambitions of regional domination, rather than merely following the orders of his superiors. The possibility cannot be discounted that criticism against Barrios was often a case of shooting the messenger of anti-agrarian federal policies.

Three prominent cases reveal the complexity of Barrios' role in such disputes. The first real *agrarista* challenge to confront Barrios occurred at the hacienda of Palos Caídos y La Peñuela, some twenty kilometres to the north of Zacatlán. As early as 1923, friction had been reported between the hacienda owner and local vecinos. By October 1924 the dispute had become more formalised, with vecinos lodging land petitions to the local agrarian commission.<sup>47</sup> In December of the same year, following claims that *agraristas*



in the area had led an armed attack against the labourers on a nearby farm, Barrios moved to disarm and arrest the agrarian leaders of Palos Caídos. In his official report on the incident, Barrios noted that although the culprits were in possession of land, they refused to work it and instead relied upon the manufacture of *pulque* to provide them with an income. Their idleness, Barrios suggested, was the source of their trouble making.<sup>48</sup>

Barrios' comments appear to confirm observations on his more general attitude towards *agraristas*. José María Barrios believes that his father's actions were swayed by a deep conviction that only by toil could an individual appreciate the prize at stake. Presumably refusing to recognise the agrarian element of the Revolution as a legitimate struggle, the perceived idleness of the Palos Caídos *agraristas* would have further strengthened Barrios in his conviction that land grants could never foster campesino independence. For the *agraristas* of Palos Caídos, the die had been cast: in future years, they accused Barrios' troops of periodic intimidation, eviction and of replacing their members with his own supporters. The latest report of such an incident was sent to the president in September 1933, over three years after Barrios' forces had been transferred to Mexico City.<sup>49</sup>

The practical difficulties that Barrios had in controlling his *jefes de armas* in more remote reaches of his cacicazgo make it difficult to ascertain whether alleged abuses were the result of Barrios' own directives or the actions of undisciplined representatives. The events surrounding the death of Ramón Arellano in the municipality of Tepeyahualco (Libres) provide a well documented example. Arellano, a local trader and leader of an armed group said to be '*voluntarios de 46/o. Regimiento*', first received broader attention in July 1927 when the local agrarian committee accused him of having attacked and killed members of a civilian peace-keeping force during a local fiesta. The

committee alleged that the attack was only one example of the violence to which Arellano had subjected the community. The committee implored both the Ministry of War and the *Jefatura* to remove Arellano from the area. In a subsequent military report, the 46th. Battalion's garrison in Libres absolved Arellano of any blame stating that the violence was caused by a group of 20 drunks who had become uncontrollable and had attacked the police.<sup>50</sup> Arellano remained in charge of the *cuerpo voluntario*.

By November 1927 the agrarian committee had placed its grievances before the president. Instead of suppressing rebel activity, they claimed that Arellano was concentrating his efforts on intimidating *agraristas* within the community. Demetrio Barrios replied to the *Jefatura* that the accusations were untrue and were politically motivated.<sup>51</sup> In February 1928 *agraristas* in Tepeyahualco repeated their charges against Arellano before the Secretaría de Gobernación. This time they broadened their attack by suggesting that Barrios was personally responsible for a campaign of violence and murder against *agraristas* in their region.<sup>52</sup> Further accusations against Arellano appeared in 1928, yet the next investigation was of a much different nature. In June 1929 judicial authorities opened an enquiry into the murder of Arellano, who was ambushed on a road near Tepeyahualco.<sup>53</sup> No-one was ever convicted of the crime.

Not until the removal of Barrios' troops from the Sierra did a full judicial enquiry investigate the wide range of accusations lodged against Arellano and Barrios. The findings of the enquiry are interesting: the cases against Barrios were not proved, while the blame for all atrocities was placed upon the dead, and legally unrepresented, Arellano.<sup>54</sup> Was Barrios still able to count on a certain amount of protection from federal authorities, or was he indeed, unable to control the actions of some of his *jefe de armas*? The degree

to which either applies is hard to determine. What is more certain, however, is that as far as his *jefes de armas* were concerned, discipline was an entirely internal matter. In private communiques Barrios might warn, even replace, his *jefes de armas* for abuses of power, but in public, they could confidently expect to receive the full backing of the Barrios family.

These hearings took place in 1932 and were indicative of a state government attack on Barrios' reputation following his removal from the Sierra. It should be remembered that a year later, Palos Caídos *agraristas* would claim continued abuses by Barrios troops. Barrios' emphatic denial of these latest charges and his suggestion that competent authorities set up a commission to investigate them, appears a little extreme given that his troops had been re-deployed to Mexico City three and a half years earlier. This apparent over-reaction, however, betrayed a man under pressure. The claims by *agraristas* in Palos Caídos came at a time when more serious allegations were being investigated concerning alleged atrocities by Barrios' men on the rancherías of El Paredón and Corral Blanco, some sixty kilometres to the south of Palos Caídos.

Barrios' involvement in the area began when he rented land on El Paredón and Corral Blanco. Hans Werner Tobler suggests that this tenancy was a device through which the owner hoped to limit the damage caused by agrarian reform.<sup>55</sup> Land on El Paredón had already been given to *agraristas* and by October 1925, local agrarian leaders were already claiming their members to be victims of abuses committed by the hacienda owner and troops belonging to Barrios. In a clear example of the strength of support that Barrios then enjoyed with his superiors, General Almazán responded to the complaints by ordering a detachment of Barrios' own forces to police the situation, arguing that these

were the only federal forces in the area and that he could vouch for their high reputation.<sup>56</sup>

Further land grants were made in the area in 1928, and an uneasy truce appears to have lasted until Barrios' removal from the Sierra in May 1930. Two years later, the Puebla City daily, *La Opinión*, reported the killing of a campesino on El Paredón. The murder was alleged to have been committed by Barrios' cousin, Dario Barrios who, far from accompanying the battalion to Mexico City, was reported to have occupied the ranch together with a group of armed men.<sup>57</sup> Subsequent investigations appear to have been ineffective, and during the following year agrarian representatives accused Barrios troops of similar atrocities. The tension culminated in November 1933 when, according to *La Opinión*, an armed gang belonging to Barrios carried out a massacre of innocent campesinos in nearby Corral Blanco.<sup>58</sup> Barrios informed his superiors that all allegations were false and that the officers accused in the article and subsequent allegations had 'always been garrisoned at their headquarters in San Joaquín, Mexico City'. It must have been quite awkward for Barrios to explain how a military investigation, in February 1934, encountered Lieutenant Dario Barrios and two sergeants still in possession of the hacienda. Dario Barrios insisted that he and his men had been acting under orders from the Ministry of War and that only recently had these orders been superseded by others recalling them to Mexico City.<sup>59</sup>

The events at Corral Blanco represented the nearest Barrios came to falling foul of his military superiors. If he had not directly disobeyed orders he had, at the very least, disguised the true details of troop deployment at El Paredón. A more penetrating investigation of Barrios' insubordination was avoided by the immediate re-deployment of the 46th. Battalion to Chiapas.<sup>60</sup> There is no indication whether the battalion's transfer to Chiapas was directly

related to the controversy in Puebla. However, the fact that Barrios' transfer to Mexico had not neutralised his influence in the Sierra de Puebla would not have been lost on those who made the decision to send the battalion to five years of internal exile in Chiapas.

How can one summarise Barrios' attitude towards the campesino? His actions appear to have been contradictory, yet José María Barrios provides one constant thread to help understand his father's stance. If one accepts the son's assessment that his father was driven by the belief that only through true toil could lasting reward be appreciated, then Barrios' actions take on a certain logic. *Faenas* represented the toil through which improvement of communications and agricultural techniques could benefit the honest campesino. *Agraristas* were placed in another category. While *agraristas* may have argued that the Revolution was all about a struggle for a land-based independence, this was not Barrios' experience. Whatever motives made Barrios and his campesino army fight during the years of civil war, land reform was certainly not the issue. José María Barrios suggests that the friction with *agraristas* in El Paredón was due to the fact that they were not satisfied with the land they occupied and had tried to seize additional land and monopolise water supplies. For Barrios, such indiscipline and degeneracy were inherent in a system that gave, without demanding the requisite personal commitment.

As the political tide turned against Barrios, so the lasting impression of his rule was planted; an enemy of the campesino and a barrier impeding the campesino's rights under the Revolution. This image discounts the positive efforts that Barrios made towards raising the living standards of his fellow serranos, efforts that produced tangible benefits and suited the federal government's developmentalist philosophy. Some of his projects lapsed into disuse after his removal from the Sierra, yet others survived to give lasting

testament to the more positive aspects of what has been portrayed as a negative cacicazgo. Campesinos in many districts still benefit from the irrigation channels laid during the 1920s. Their children benefit from yet another of Barrios' initiatives, the most obvious evidence of which is the proliferation of schools and libraries which extends across the whole of the Sierra.

### *Education in the Sierra*

In June 1923, the celebrated Chilean poet, Gabriela Mistral, addressed a select audience in the public library in Zacapoaxtla. While she extolled the virtues of such establishments and their potential to enrich community life, she would not have been aware of the person most responsible for fulfilling these ambitions for the serranos.<sup>61</sup> This was not the state government which, at the time that Mistral encouraged increased literacy, was struggling to sustain even meagre attendance at badly under-funded schools. In contrast, within a month of Mistral's speech, the tiny mountain village of Cuacuila took delivery of materials for establishing its own library, together with a supply of scholastic provisions sufficient to satisfy the needs of the one thousand school children that lived in Cuacuila and the surrounding villages.<sup>62</sup> As state educators struggled with unrealistic objectives, Barrios, capitalising upon the recent visit to Tetela of Secretary of Education, José Vasconcelos, was again converting fine words into actions.<sup>63</sup>

The personal archive that the Barrios family amassed during the 1920s is revealing in many aspects. Among the wealth of documents relating to military and public security matters, the presence of numerous school reports appears somewhat out of place. They indicate, however, that Barrios' commitment to education was not merely a matter of paying lip-service to visiting dignitaries,

but was a subject which commanded his special attention. The cacique received and kept minute details of school life; the attendance and performance of children, the quality and training of teachers, the recruitment and payment of teachers and school directors; the organisation of community contributions to make up for budget shortfalls.

Certainly, the task facing Puebla's post-revolutionary educational authorities was formidable. The Revolution had resulted in the closure of many schools and those that remained open were poorly attended. It would not be easy to satisfy political aspirations for a swift return to civilian life. In July 1919, reflecting Carranza's desire to regenerate rural education, the state government issued circulars to all ayuntamientos encouraging the organisation and collection of data in order to establish schools in haciendas. Yet the reality is more evident in messages received by Tetela authorities informing that schools in Huitzílán had been forced to close due to refusal of vecinos to make up the shortfall in teachers' wages. Across the Sierra in Cuetzalan, the municipal president was forced to approach wealthy coffee merchants and Barrios' brother Demetrio, then local military commander, for loans of 100 pesos in order to pay the wages of school directors.<sup>64</sup>

Little changed following the fall of Carranza. Observing that 'the majority of Ayuntamientos [owed] their teachers a great deal of money', the Puebla state government urged all authorities to pay the teachers' salaries punctually.<sup>65</sup> Yet such encouragement appears to have had little effect. In reply to state government criticism that their ayuntamiento appeared lethargic in its promotion of education, the Zacapoaxtla authorities replied that it was not an absence of enthusiasm that had resulted in the closure of some of their schools, but an absolute lack of finances provoked by a refusal of vecinos to resume the financial burden of education.<sup>66</sup>

Whether in education, maintenance of communication routes, or payment of local taxes, citizens throughout the Sierra were perceived by the government as displaying a widespread lack of respect for municipal and state authorities. In the absence of civilian figures of influence, the increasing power of Barrios was used by both federal and state governments as the catalyst for changing attitudes.

During Carranza's presidency, Governor Alfonso Cabrera attempted to harness Barrios' intimate knowledge of the Tetela region to encourage towns, *barrios* and ranches to become more receptive to local educational initiatives.<sup>67</sup> By the time the state government's inspector of schools, Prof. Carlos Barrios (unrelated), made a tour of inspection through the Sierra in September 1920, practical evidence of Barrios' utility was beginning to emerge. From Cuetzalan, the hard-pressed Zacapoaxtla authorities were informed that a new boys' school had been opened on the *Ranchería de Reyes-Ogpan* as a result of Barrios' initiative. Closer to home, in Aquixtla, Barrios had become personally involved in a stock-taking exercise of educational material in the municipality's schools, while in Huehuetla, he had arranged for the state government to send books and equipment for the local schools.<sup>68</sup> Yet the shallowness of the state government's commitment to education was still evident. In 1922, Zacatlán authorities were informed that the government had decided to cancel an earlier decision to grant local authorities a monthly amount of 200 pesos towards the costs of education.<sup>69</sup>

Despite these examples of Barrios' involvement in education, it would be fair to say that educational reform was a low priority in the early years of his *cacicazgo*. While he made great strides in providing a basic education for all soldiers and in equipping Cuacuila's schools to the highest standards, education in other areas of the Sierra was generally left to the vagaries of federal and state provision. It was only in 1927, following a tour of inspection by the federal



Undersecretary of Education, Prof. Moisés Saenz, that Barrios displayed increasing enthusiasm for regional development of education. Saenz's report confirmed that the Sierra displayed only patchy success within a general picture of educative mediocrity. The report outlined the historical precedent for education provision in the Sierra. Until the end of the Porfiriato, the Sierra had enjoyed extensive education, with schools existing in all communities of significance. The costs of such education were found by a 50 centavos personal monthly contributions from all adult males. The discipline imposed by past caciques, such as Lucas, had ensured that the contributions were maintained and that education flourished.

Saenz placed much of the blame for the current malady in education upon the policies of past state governments. In 1916 the governor had abolished the personal contribution, replacing it with a special education tax. Revenue from the tax was to be divided, one half being retained locally to invest in education, the other half going to the state government for redistribution through more general educational programmes. Saenz claimed the policy to have been a disaster. Highlighting the case of Zacatlán, he lamented that only six schools now operated where there had previously been eighty-three. Of the six still open, only two were financed by the state government. The blame for the poor condition of education in the Sierra was placed squarely upon the shoulders of 'revolutionary' reform at state level. Saenz concluded that although it was not federal government policy to intervene in areas where state-run schools had previously existed, the Sierra was littered with half built and empty schools; testaments to the inadequate policies of successive state governments that had found themselves in financial and political turmoil.

Another interesting aspect of Saenz's report is his comment upon life in the Indian communities of the Sierra. He suggested that despite the best efforts

of teachers, the educational policies being followed bore little relevance to the everyday needs of serrano communities. Three or four years of basic instruction in reading and writing were inadequate, Saenz suggested, to help the serrano escape his miserable cycle of subsistence farming. He called upon federal departments to devise educational policies to provide serranos with relevant practical skills. Only in this way, he argued, would Indian communities more fully embrace education and benefit from the civilising influence that it could deliver.

Saenz's philosophy must have struck a chord with Barrios, who accompanied the Undersecretary on much of his tour of the Sierra. The sentiments in Saenz's subsequent report were almost identical to the practical approach that Barrios had striven to adopt in other areas of progressive development. Barrios began to assume the kind of responsibility for regional education taken on by his predecessor, Juan Francisco Lucas. Together with military reports, Barrios began to receive details of local education provision. As Barrios' interest in developing education reached a wider audience, so too, the requests for his help in acquiring teaching aids began to increase.

In the rural school at Jicolapa, (Zacatlán), the teacher asked for Barrios' help to ensure delivery of essential teaching materials for almost one hundred children which had previously been promised by state authorities.<sup>70</sup> There is also evidence that the federal school in Cuacuila was receiving funds from Barrios in order to employ an assistant teacher.<sup>71</sup> Demetrio Barrios used the cacicazgo's representative in the federal congress, Salustio Cabrera, to obtain maps of Puebla for distribution in isolated Sierra schools.<sup>72</sup> In another initiative, the Barrios brothers encouraged the establishment of local education committees to supervise the cultivation of crops, the sale of which would help fund local education. In one community, Zitlala, the success of such a scheme

had meant that education funds could be used to extend small loans at 3% per month interest for vecinos who wished to improve their agricultural resources.<sup>73</sup>

Evidence of more fundamental education programmes also began to emerge during this period. An unsigned report written in 1928 entitled, *Bases para la organización, sostenimiento y vigilancia de Escuelas Rudimentarias en la Sierra Norte del Estado de Puebla*, bears the address of Barrios' ranch in Zacatempan, (Chignahuapan). The report defined educational objectives in line with federal and state Constitutions: the reorganisation of finances, channels and levels of authority; regulations regarding the training, conduct and duties of teachers and inspectors; the establishment of a regional education committee in Zacatlán to monitor the quality of personnel and adherence to guide-lines; and, finally, a series of practical proposals for putting such plans into action, among which was the suggestion that regular teacher training courses be held in Zacatlán to rectify weaknesses identified by the school inspectorate. The report was sent to both federal and state governments in order to attract their support.<sup>74</sup>

Although there is no evidence of government responses, several of these teacher training courses did take place.<sup>75</sup> The courses appear to have encouraged local intellectuals and teachers to deliver papers relating to the peculiar problems related to education within an indigenous area such as the Sierra. One paper addressed the difficulties associated with teaching in Totonac communities. The paper encouraged all teachers experiencing such difficulties to take heart in the knowledge that by spreading the national language they were serving the patriotic cause. The teacher in Cuacuila spoke of how the prevalence of witchcraft in Indian societies could be used by teachers who, by means of positive suggestion, might assume the role of 'educative witches' in the minds of Indian children. Other instructors wrote articles relating to

teaching methods, the responsibility of the school in spreading propaganda on hygiene and encouraging the role of the mother as a teacher within the home.<sup>76</sup>

The scope of the topics covered by these courses reflected a broader trend in federal education. Rural teachers were not just ambassadors of the national language, but were charged with representing the Revolution at a local level. As Mary Kay Vaughan reveals, revolutionary education stretched beyond the classroom and sought to influence all aspects of Mexican life. In the Sierra, education was seen as the civilising influence to combat traditional superstitions and moral weakness; a weakness that was highlighted by the widespread susceptibility to alcohol.

It is unclear to what extent Barrios shared every aspect of the drive to 'civilise' the Indian; after all, his knowledge of traditional cultures had been paramount in his ascent to power. It is certain, however, that he was wholly supportive of moves to eradicate alcoholism. Government initiatives arguing that alcohol destroyed a man's self-respect and left him incapable of providing for his family, neatly coincided with Barrios' own philosophy regarding the need for every serrano to realise his full potential.

Pre-empting a federal government campaign against alcoholism, Barrios issued broad restrictions on the number of outlets and quantities of alcohol sold in various Sierra towns. *Aguardiente*, Barrios argued, fundamentally weakened the resolve of the independent serrano. As early as July 1928, various municipalities in the Sierra had adopted Barrios' lead on the restriction of *pulque* sales in order to create, 'the improvement of our people and the implementation of healthy practices which will serve as an example for generations to come'.<sup>77</sup> During subsequent months, Barrios instructed his network of *jefes de armas* to

co-operate with municipalities in Libres and Chignahuapan in their efforts to discourage alcohol sales.

Barrios outlined his views on the anti-alcohol issue in a letter to a hostile state government concerned about a reduction in its revenues derived from taxes on alcohol sales. He explained that the municipalities had decided to restrict sales on Sundays and holidays:

[...] To avoid scandals and consequential lawlessness, so that the humble classes and workers might abandon the habit of heavy drinking in order that, as soon as possible, future generations might develop into a healthy, strong, moral society, with the capacity to adapt itself to its duties and various activities efficiently.<sup>78</sup>

By July 1929, the state government had moved to support the federal initiative against alcoholism, calling upon the Ministry of War to obtain Barrios' co-operation in its efforts.<sup>79</sup> It is somewhat curious that even as Governor Almazán strove to destroy Barrios, he sought to use the cacique's influence to further state government objectives. Little wonder then, that Almazán chose to make his appeal through the good offices of the Ministry of War rather than deal directly with Barrios.

State hijacking of the anti-alcohol campaign was only one example of a more systematic attempt to eclipse the influence and role that Barrios had enjoyed in the Sierra. Road projects, education, and local law enforcement had all been recovered by state authority, while the deployment of the 45th. Battalion signalled a similar move by the federal government to neutralise Barrios' military role. Barrios had become increasingly superfluous and while

he received grudging praise for his initiatives, he more frequently suffered damning criticism for his methods.

Perhaps it would be wrong to make too many general conclusions regarding the motives behind the projects that Barrios promoted in the Sierra. His uncanny knack of anticipating government development policies suggests that his actions were swayed more by opportunism than any structured, global, approach to revolutionary change. Nonetheless, patterns do emerge from his actions that reveal much about the man and his ability to retain favour. The topics upon which he chose to concentrate were issues that the revolutionary government had identified as priorities. By sometimes reacting to stated federal government objectives, at others pre-empting them, Barrios showed himself to be an astute judge of political trends. Whether in road building, education, agricultural development schemes or, most crucially, in military loyalty, Barrios repeatedly affirmed the impression that he could produce what the national government demanded. Even his conflicts with *agraristas* were conducted during a period when there was less than whole-hearted federal government support for comprehensive land reform.

Another common characteristic of his various initiatives was that in apparently pursuing goals that would benefit others, he was able to strengthen his own hand. This tactic does not exclusively refer to the embezzlement of government development funds, although the possibility of this motive cannot be ruled out. Compliance with 'revolutionary' objectives provided Barrios with a large degree of credit and goodwill from federal and state government. More practically, road construction projects allowed him to expand his network of armed allies. Similarly, so important was it that road projects should obtain local co-operation, that Barrios frequently replaced less compliant local municipal officials: the gratitude of subsequent appointees further extended his

range of clients. In his seemingly innocent desire to improve sanitation and hygiene standards, Barrios produced another strand in the network of patronage. Loyalty to Barrios became a condition for receiving the materials and funds that might foster such community projects. In pursuing the laudable aims of eradicating the curse of alcoholism from the Sierra, Barrios furthered his own cause by striking at the financial heart of those of his political opponents who owned distilleries.<sup>80</sup>

So was Barrios little more than a wily character who used his heightened appreciation of political trends to further his own cause? The facts suggest more than sheer opportunism. One must remember the character of the man; an Indian who came from humble rural backgrounds, who rose to the point at which he regularly conversed with presidents of the Republic, yet who spent his final years in the rural settings of his childhood still not having totally mastered the language of his superiors in Mexico City. Although he had many opportunities, his preferred home remained the mountainous region of his childhood. This demonstrates a deep affinity with the Sierra, its people and the *ranchero* way of life.

There is a case for arguing that Barrios' initiatives were, at least in part, borne from a genuine desire to improve the lives of the *campesinos* who shared his beloved Sierra. This is not to suggest that he was a social revolutionary, far from it. Equality and social justice did not fire his enthusiasm and, in this respect, he would never have had much in common with the *agraristas*. He would, however, have had sympathy with those *campesinos* who sought his help to help themselves. In this role, there was no better patron than Barrios. This rigid philosophy closed his mind to the possibility that such objectives were more likely to be achieved by state support for organised collective initiatives. He had never personally suffered the exploitation felt by *campesinos* in many

other areas of the Republic and, therefore, was incapable of conceding that the agrarian cause might have been justified. It is all the more ironic, then, that his natural enemies fell into two main camps: those *agraristas* who had been the victims of past exploitation by landed elites; and those elites within the Sierra who had tried to impede his development programmes in order to preserve their exploitation of local campesinos. Nowhere was the struggle for control of serranos more hotly disputed than in the district of Zacapoaxtla. Exactly why this should have arisen, forms the subject of the following chapter.



### Footnotes for Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup> AML, Gobernación, May 1920. Circular no. 1 dated 12 May 1920.

<sup>2</sup> For sources on education and propaganda see: Vaughan, M.K., *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928*, (DeKalb, 1982); Ruiz, R.E., *Mexico: The Challenge of Poverty and Illiteracy*, (California, 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Womack, J., 'The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920', *CHLA*, V, ch. 2, pp. 79-153.

<sup>4</sup> Meyer, J., 'Mexico revolution and reconstruction in the 1920s', *CHLA*, V, ch. 3, p. 158.

<sup>5</sup> Vaughan, *The State*, pp. 134-35.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century ambitious projects to build canals, roads and railways within the Sierra had been frustrated by inadequate funding and the technical difficulties associated with the mountainous terrain.

See: *Proyecto de una vía de comunicación de la Mesa Central a la Costa de Papantla pasando por el Distrito de Tlatlauqui promovido ante de la H. Asamblea del Estado por el diputado de la misma C. Manuel M. Vargas, y llevado al Hon. Congreso de la Unión*, (Puebla, 1974); Arriaga, F.J., *Expediente Geográfico-Estadístico*, (Mexico, 1873), gives details of a proposal to build a national highway linking Zacapoaxtla with Tecolutla in the *tierra caliente*.

<sup>7</sup> AMT de O, Caja 413.

On 24 Dec. 1913, authorities in Tonalapa complained of widespread disruption caused by revolutionary forces who repeatedly destroyed recently repaired telegraph lines.

AMT de O, Caja 426, exp. 19.

An inspection of military telegraph equipment in Xochiapulco revealed evidence of intentional damage, including signs that the lines had been used by unauthorised person(s) for illicit motives.

<sup>8</sup> AMT de O, Caja 29, exp. 9, Gobernación.

See response to the questionnaire dated 21 Jan. 1920.

<sup>9</sup> For further examples of vecino resistance to authority directives, see:

AMC, Caja 137, exp. 2, Gobernación, 104, report from municipal president dated 31 Aug. 1918; AMZ'x, Fomento 58, 16, correspondence from Xochitlán dated 4 Oct. 1920.

<sup>10</sup> AMT de O, Caja 21, exp. 49, Fomento.

See state circular dated 19 Dec. 1919 and accompanying letter.

<sup>11</sup> APGL, 1920. Letter dated 10 Feb. 1920 from Rouaix to Lucas.

<sup>12</sup> AMT de O, Caja 20, exp. 30, Fomento.

See letter dated 24 Sept. 1919 from Lucas to Carlos B. Zetina. Although Miguel Lucas may not have been the most appropriate person to speak for the campesino, Thomson's work on Juan Francisco Lucas suggests that his son's comments are an accurate reflection of land distribution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

13 APGL. For Santa Fe's thoughts on civil guards, see letter dated 4 Sept. 1917. For his thoughts on resolving lawlessness in the Sierra, see letter dated 20 July 1917.

14 AGN, O-C, 816-Z-20.

See posters produced by Prof. Carlos Barrios (no relation to Gabriel Barrios) dated 6 Nov. 1921 and Prof. Efraín F. Bonilla dated 18 Nov. 1921.

15 Barrios' concerns over the strategic use of paths is clearly expressed in his communiques to local authorities:

AMT de O, Caja 2. Letter dated 28 Oct. 1917 from Barrios to the municipal president of Tetela; AMZ'x, Fomento 58, 1. Letter sent in Jan. 1920 from Barrios to the municipal president of Zacapoaxtla.

16 FAC y T, Sec. de Ministry of War, Gav. 63, Exp. 79, leg. 14/14. ff. 680-83.

Although the report carries no date, judging by the advanced state of the projects mentioned it must have been produced in 1929-30.

17 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

Military report dated 1 May 1923. Such an experience would have come as little surprise to the many Indian soldiers of Barrios' battalion, very few of whom possessed footwear in the first place.

18 It should be remembered that Barrios' initiatives preceded the influx of oil revenues that provided finance for major civilian construction projects under Calles' presidency. See Meyer, *CHLA*, V, p. 174.

19 AGN, O-C, 121-I-P-6.

Correspondence dated 10 Oct. 1922 between Obregón and Barrios.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Telegrammes for May 1925.

See letter from Barrios to General Almazán requesting delivery of telecommunications equipment.

20 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

Military report dated 1 May 1923.

21 *El Monitor*, 19 Sept. 1921, no. 1176, p. 1.

22 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45, p. 9.

Military report dated 1 May 1923.

23 AGN, O-C, 816-Z-20.

Obregón's reply, dated 13 Aug 1923, was sent to the municipal president of Cuetzalan who had asked if *faenas* were prohibited by the Constitution.

24 AMT de O, Caja 48, Gobernación, no. 317.

See letter dated 24 May 1924 from the auxiliary municipal president of Hueytentan to the municipal president of Tetela de Ocampo.

25 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letters for May 1926.

See letter dated 28 March 1926.

26 AMZ'x, Gobernación, 8.

See letter dated 7 Feb. 1928 from the municipal president of Xochiapulco to his counterpart in Zacapoaxtla.

27 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Reports for July 1926.

See letter dated 14 July 1926 from the municipal president of Espinal to the *jefe de armas* in Coyutla.

28 Slade, 'Kinship in the Social Organisation', pp. 155-185; Torres-Trueba, 'Faccionalismo en un municipio mexicano', pp. 772-749.

29 Viqueira & Palerm, 'Alcoholismo, Brujería y Homocido'.

30 APGL. See programme, dated 4 Nov. 1913 suggesting amendments to the future duties of *jefes políticos*.

31 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926, Reports for July 1926.

See letter dated 14 July 1926 from the municipal president of Espinal to the *jefe de armas* in Coyutla.

32 ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 382-402.

33 Ibid., f. 325.

See letter dated 9 March 1927 from R. Thompson of the 'Special Commission for Mining and Oil Exploration in Veracruz and Puebla'.

34 AML, Beneficiencia, exp. 5, 1928.

Letters dated 29 Feb. 1928 and 7 March 1928.

AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

Letter dated 24 May 1926 from the municipal president of Tetela to the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público.

35 AMT de O, Caja 18, exp. 75, Obras Públicas.

See summary, dated 1 Jan. 1918, of work conducted during 1917.

36 AMT de O, Caja 86, exp. 1, SCOP.

See letter dated 28 Sept. 1943.

Interview with Alejandro L. Huerta Mora (Presidente de aguas, incharge of the *Solidaridad* committee maintaining the canal), 8 Nov. 1993, Tonalapa, Tetela.

This canal was renovated in 1943, with Barrios and his son, José María, as the project's central organising figures. The *Solidaridad* programme has now adopted the canal, and regular labour is organised to provide maintenance.

37 ANP, Tetela, Caja 12, vol. 1, nos. 40, 46.

On 29 April 1919, Abraham Lucas sold 43 plots of the ranch "El Paraiso", Xaltatempán, Tetela. Two months later, 15 more plots were sold, some of which were bought by Gabriel, Bardoniano and Demetrio Barrios.

ANP, Caja 12, vol. 1, 1920-1, protocol 2, no. 145 and 147.

In March 1921, the inheritors of Juan N. Méndez's estate sold various plots of *la finca*, Santa Elena, Cuautempán, to former employees, (*jornaleros* and *domésticas*).

38 Meyer, *CHLA*, V, p. 174.

Between 1925-1928 federal funding for the construction of dams and canals consumed 6.5% of the national budget. Barrios had already moved to ensure that the Sierra obtained its share of federal funds.

39 AGN, O-C, 605-T-6.

See letter from Obregón dated 21 March 1922.

40 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters for August 1925.

Copy of a declaration of intent signed by the *junta* on 21 March 1922.

41 AML, Fomento, (1928), exps. 19, 21, 23, 27; AML, Beneficiencia, (1928), exp. 5; AML, Gobernación, (1928), exp. 33.

42 AML, Fomento, Circular IV, dated 13 Feb. 1928.

43 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925.

Calles' letter dated 9 Feb. 1925 thanks Barrios for the bottles of orange juice that he had sent via Ricardo Márquez Galindo.

44 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1930.

Minutes of a meeting held at the presidencia, Concepción, Atlequizayan, on 5 May 1930.

45 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letters sent/received for January 1926.

Letter dated 14 Jan. 1926 from Márquez Galindo to Barrios.

46 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1927. Telegrammes for October 1927.

In October 1927, Calles ordered Barrios to move against *agrarista* rebels in the Teziutlán area, and in doing so, to liaise with the troops of the subsequent 'champion' of the campesino, General Lázaro Cárdenas.

47 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45. p. 4.

Periódico Oficial del Estado de Puebla, 1924.

Item no. 19 refers to documentation dated 21 Oct. 1924 notifying the hacienda owner that a petition had been received by the local agrarian commission.

48 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1924. Telegrammes sent/received December 1924.

Telegramme sent on 25 Dec. 1924, by Barrios to General Cruz, *Jefe de Operaciones Militares*, Puebla.

49 ADN, C, 2-1145, f. 398.

See letter dated 18 Oct 1928 from the Comisión Nacional Agraria to Ministry of War.

AMZ'n, Justicia, 10, 16, 1502.

In a letter dated 30 June 1932 from Governor Almazán to the municipal president of Zacatlán, it appears that one source of friction in the area was based upon land disputes between the ejido of Palos Caídos and neighbouring *agraristas* in Peñuela.

ADN, C, 2-1145, f. 544.

See letter dated 13 Sept. 1933 from the vecinos of Pueblo Nuevo y Peñuela to the President.

50 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1927. Documents sent/received July 1927.

Letter dated 14 July 1927 sent to the Ministry of War from the local agrarian committee of Tepeyahualco.

Letter dated 27 July 1927 sent to Barrios from Alvarez Contreras, commander of the garrison in Libres.

51 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1927. Correspondence for November 1927.

Letter dated 3 Nov. 1927 from the *Jefatura*, Puebla to Barrios.

Letter dated 23 Nov. 1927 from Demetrio Barrios to the *Jefatura*.

52 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Documents for March 1928.

Letter dated 22 March 1928 from Gobernación to the *Jefatura*, Puebla.

53 AML, Justicia, exp. 18, April 1928.

54 ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 433-43, 692-94.

All cases were investigated during February and March 1932.

55 Tobler, in *Riot, Rebellion and Revolution*, p. 495.

56 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters for October 1925.

See letter dated 24 Oct. 1925 from Almazán to Barrios.

57 *La Opinión*, 11 July 1930, no. 2257, p. 4; *La Opinión*, 15 July 1930, no. 2261, p. 6.

58 ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 682-91, 941-42; *La Opinión*, 10 Nov. 1933, no. 3469, p. 1.

59 ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 579-89.

- 60 ADN, H, XI/333.21/43. *Historia de la Unidad 46/o. BTN. INF.*, p. 28.
- 61 AMZ'x, Instrucción Pública, exp. 18, 1923.
- 62 BLC.RHAM. 1923. Telegrammes received/sent July 1923.  
Telegramme dated 26 July 1923 from José Galvez to Barrios.
- 63 AMT de O, Caja 46, Gobernación, no. 322.  
See documents dated 20 March 1923.
- 64 AMC. Caja 146, Hacienda.  
See letter from the municipal president dated 1 March 1920.
- 65 AML, Oficios de la Presidencia, 1920. Circular no. 74, dated 17 Aug. 1920.
- 66 AMZ'x, Instrucción Pública, Primaria, no. 217, dated 19 Feb. 1921.
- 67 AMT de O, Caja 26, exp. 54, Seguridad Pública.  
See letter from Barrios to the municipal president of Tetela informing him of the governor's request for military cooperation.
- 68 AMZ'x, Instrucción Pública, exp. 22, 49, (Jan. 1920).  
BLC.RHAM. Caja 1921. Correspondence for January 1921.  
See memo. dated 14 Jan. 1921 from the municipal president of Aquixtla to Barrios.  
AMZ'n, Instrucción Pública, Caja 16, 26, 169, dated 19 Oct. 1921.
- 69 ACP. Sección de leyes, p. 246, dated 8 April 1922.  
Presumably, the grant became a casualty of the mounting political pressure that culminated with the removal of the Delahuertista governor, Manjarrez.
- 70 BLC.RHAM. 1928. Letters for March 1928.  
See letter dated 11 March 1928 from Angel Samuel Zambrano to Demetrio Barrios.
- 71 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1927. Expediente on schools for 1927-9.  
See letter dated 3 May 1928 from the Director of Federal Schools in Puebla City to Cuacuila's teacher, Baudelio Cananedo.
- 72 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Letters for September 1928.  
See letter dated 16 Sept. 1928 from Demetrio Barrios to Salustio Cabrera.
- 73 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929.  
See letter dated June 1929 from M. Becerra to Demetrio Barrios.
- 74 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928.  
Report dated 17 July 1928.
- 75 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Instrucción.  
Demetrio Barrios invited all teachers who had assisted in 'Education Orientation Courses and Examinations' to attend a lunch to be held in Zacatlán on 29 Dec. 1928.
- 76 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929.  
See paper dated 30 July 1929 entitled *La Castellanización del indios*.  
See paper dated 13 Sept. 1929 entitled *La Brujería*.  
See various leaflets in the Sección Pedagógica.
- 77 AML, Gobernación, exp. 28, 1928.
- 78 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Correspondence January-December 1928.  
See letter dated 22 Oct. 1928 from Barrios to the Secretary-general of the state government.

<sup>79</sup> AML, Gobernación, exp. 30, 1929.

See the letter dated 31 Aug. 1930 from the municipal president Libres to the auxiliary municipal president in Oriental.

<sup>80</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Documents for August 1928.

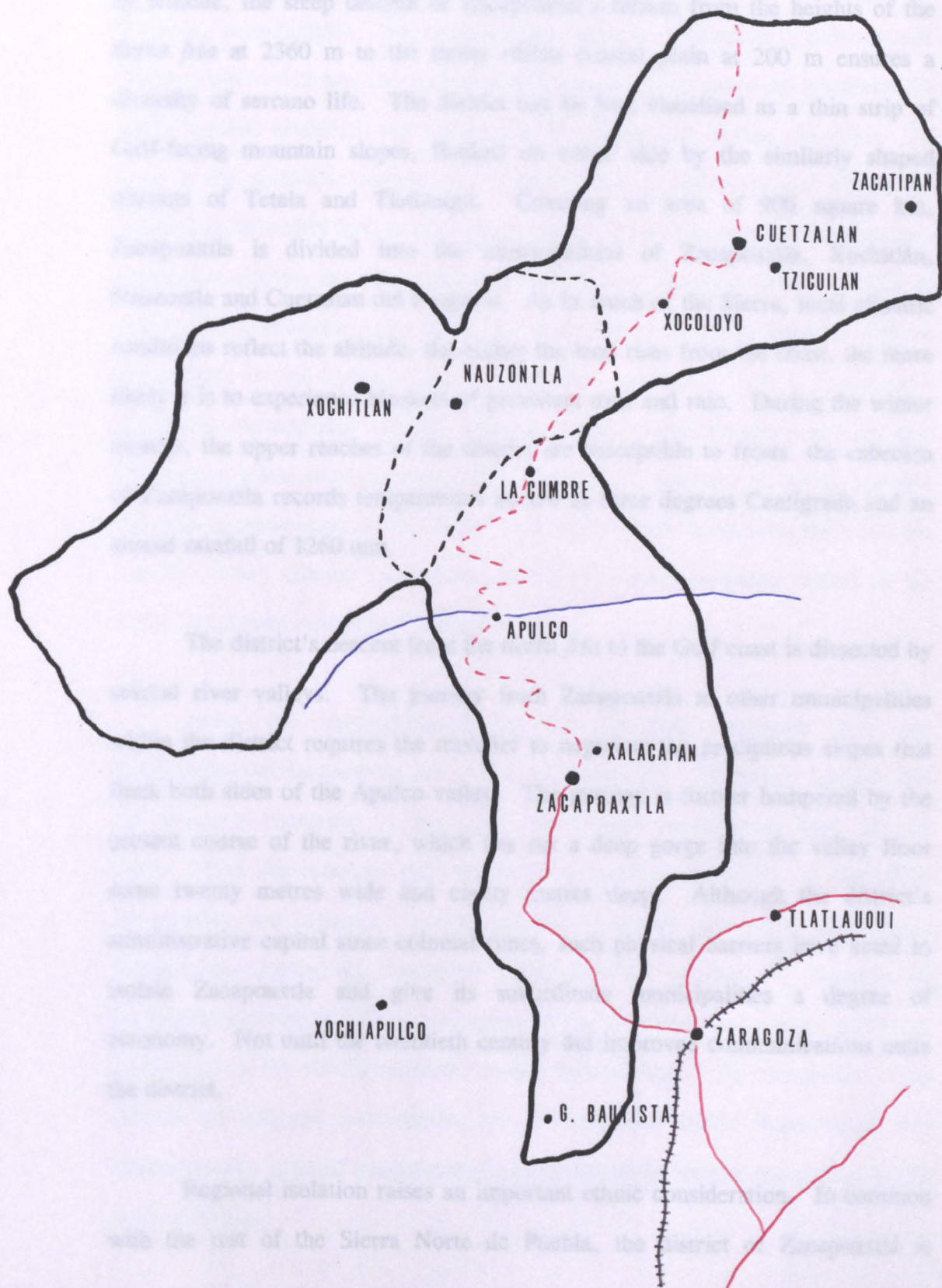
In a list of the main *aguardiente* manufacturers in the municipality of Zacatlán, Rodolfo Arroyo produced 6000 litres per annum, A. González, 3000 litres, Luis Galindo, 8000 litres.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929. Documents for February 1929.

See circular dated 25 Feb. 1929 issued by the state government regarding members of the ayuntamiento. Among the members of the state government imposed provisional ayuntamiento of Zacatlán appears the name, Rodolfo Arroyo. Other members included Alberto Galindo and Victor González. While there is no evidence to suggest that these latter aldermen were related to the *aguardiente* manufacturers, Rodolfo Arroyo's inclusion suggests that the anti-alcohol campaign was connected with political issues.

## 6. The Barrios cacicazgo: A case study of the District of Zacapoaxtla

To some, Gabriel Barrios was a cruel tyrant; to others, a benevolent patriarch. To understand how his cacicazgo penetrated communities, factions and even families, it is helpful to explore the interplay of these influences at the local level. The district of Zacapoaxtla is ideal for taking a closer look at the workings of the Barrios cacicazgo as it shares many of the topographical, ethnic and social characteristics found elsewhere within the Sierra. Its unique value as a case study lies in the fact that, whereas other districts displayed several typical features of the cacicazgo, Zacapoaxtla contained the full range of such factors within one district: revolutionary conflict; the proliferation of the network of *cuerpos voluntarios*; patronage and clientage of local civilian officials; a regional development project of profound significance; a struggle for political power with regional and national implications. This last point, combined with the fact that Zacapoaxtla has frequently proved to be a fertile ground for the cultivation of prominent politicians, provides the historian with the opportunity to move back and forth across local and regional political boundaries, making it easier to set local events within the broader political geography.





*An introduction to the District of Zacapoaxtla*

Given that the daily activities of this rural region of Mexico are governed by altitude, the steep descent of Zacapoaxtla's terrain from the heights of the *tierra fría* at 2360 m to the *tierra cálida* coastal plain at 200 m ensures a diversity of serrano life. The district can be best visualised as a thin strip of Gulf-facing mountain slopes, flanked on either side by the similarly shaped districts of Tetela and Tlatlauqui. Covering an area of 900 square km, Zacapoaxtla is divided into the municipalities of Zacapoaxtla, Xochitlán, Nauzontla and Cuetzalan del Progreso. As in much of the Sierra, local climatic conditions reflect the altitude; the higher the land rises from the coast, the more likely it is to experience blankets of persistent mist and rain. During the winter months, the upper reaches of the district are susceptible to frosts: the cabecera of Zacapoaxtla records temperatures as low as three degrees Centigrade and an annual rainfall of 1260 mm.

The district's descent from the *tierra fría* to the Gulf coast is dissected by several river valleys. The journey from Zacapoaxtla to other municipalities within the district requires the traveller to negotiate the precipitous slopes that flank both sides of the Apulco valley. The journey is further hampered by the present course of the river, which has cut a deep gorge into the valley floor some twenty metres wide and eighty metres deep. Although the district's administrative capital since colonial times, such physical barriers have acted to isolate Zacapoaxtla and give its subordinate municipalities a degree of autonomy. Not until the twentieth century did improved communications unite the district.

Regional isolation raises an important ethnic consideration. In common with the rest of the Sierra Norte de Puebla, the district of Zacapoaxtla is

populated by Indian communities, predominantly Nahuas, Totonacs and Otomis. Poor communications meant that for much of the colonial period the administrative hand of the white elite only lightly touched the relative autonomy of Indian communities. Physical barriers acted to accentuate a demographic development which saw the cabecera of Zacapoaxtla increasingly populated by white families while the rest of the district retained its Indian character. As early as the sixteenth century, the Spanish families Alcántara and Macip are believed to have held land in the region. In the eighteenth century, documentary evidence confirms that the Alcántara and Molina families possessed title to land.<sup>1</sup> Two hundred years later the descendants of these families figured prominently in the district's post-revolutionary wrangles. Yet it would be a mistake to overestimate colonial settlement; poor communications and the lack of precious metal deposits meant that the colonial presence of white *serranos* was nothing more than token. Those with land interests in the area preferred the relative civility offered by Tlatlauquitepec, a town with easier access to the centre of colonial culture in Puebla City.

From the mid-nineteenth century, mestizo migration into the municipality of Zacapoaxtla had noticeably increased. Thomson suggests that the economic recession on the *llanos* encouraged *poblanos* to head for the Sierra, where the economy suffered less from political turmoil.<sup>2</sup> By the 1860s Zacapoaxtla was portrayed as the stalwart of liberal patriotism. It was in Zacapoaxtla, during the spring of 1864, that the famous *1<sup>er</sup> Batallón de Zacapoaxtla* mustered before descending to the *llanos* to earn a place in history for its part in the victorious battle on the fifth of May.<sup>3</sup> In recognition of its defence of national sovereignty, on 5 December 1864, Zacapoaxtla was simultaneously granted *ciudad* status and temporarily became the capital of the state of Puebla.

The portrayal of Zacapoaxtla as a symbolic centre of liberal resistance to foreign rule highlights an ambiguity inherent in Mexican liberalism. While liberalism fostered ideals of social and ethnic equality, the 'colonial' values of those who held power in Zacapoaxtla and, perhaps, in many other areas of the Republic ensured that a sense of ethnic superiority coloured the brand of liberalism offered. From its foundation, the cabecera of Zacapoaxtla saw itself as an island of white racial purity within a sea of Indian '*niños con barbas*'. For the topographical reasons mentioned above, this precious self-image was accentuated through the inability and, perhaps, unwillingness of *zacapoaxtecos* to communicate effectively with the neighbouring municipalities and districts.

It is no coincidence that a Nahua Indian, rather than a white serrano from Zacapoaxtla, became a spokesman for the region's Indian communities. Juan Francisco Lucas' prestige provided him with a quality of authority that no member of the Zacapoaxtla elite could attain. Those who sought the fighting capacity of the Indian serranos during times of conflict went to Lucas, not Zacapoaxtla. As long as national instability created the demand for soldiers, Lucas could use his pivotal position to delay external forces making inroads into Indian autonomy.<sup>4</sup>

While the degree of regional stability under the Porfiriato is debatable, the undoubted change of emphasis from militarism towards economic development in the late nineteenth century left Lucas without a role. As the patriarch's ability to provide paternal protection diminished, Indian communities in the Sierra found themselves less able to resist the pressures borne through economic development. Although Zacapoaxtla's status as state capital was short-lived, the loss of political influence was replaced by economic interest when coffee cultivation was introduced into the municipality of Cuetzalan. Jesús Flores, a mestizo coffee grower from Veracruz, was the first to introduce

seeds into the area in the 1870s. By the end of the decade modest harvests were being registered.<sup>5</sup> Increasing mestizo migration placed new pressures upon the relationship between Indian and non-Indian societies. While early mestizo demands for land were satisfied by renting Indian community property, *desamortización* led to the gradual erosion of the customary economic and political autonomy of Indian communities in the coffee zone.

The rebellion led by the Indian leader, Francisco Agustín Dieguillo, represented the most violent attempt to resist the erosion of relative Indian autonomy by mestizo coffee cultivators.<sup>6</sup> Dieguillo, however, was fighting a losing battle against a mestizo onslaught fuelled by the prospect of a lucrative coffee trade. By the turn of the century, the Flores, together with other mestizo families, Huidobro and Calderón, had broken Indian resistance in the municipality of Cuetzalan.<sup>7</sup> As the price of coffee rose, so Indian communities substituted the cultivation of staple foods for the more lucrative cash crop. Lured ever deeper into the mestizo world, Indian communities soon found their economic independence disappear and their political influence curtailed. Non-Indians gained control of the town's administration, forcing Indian families either to accept the changed situation or to seek seclusion in more remote reaches of the district.<sup>8</sup>

Demographic and economic changes in Cuetzalan reflected a trend affecting the whole district. The municipality of Zacapoaxtla received so great a wave of mestizo migration during the Porfiriato that by 1910 the population of the cabecera was one of densest in the state of Puebla.<sup>9</sup> This influx of mestizo blood into the cabecera challenged the previous hegemony enjoyed by the local white elite. Former ethnic relations had been characterised by the continuation of the white, colonial domination of their Indian neighbours; the Indian worked the land of the white elite and the produce from Indian communities was traded

in a Zacapoaxtla market controlled by the same white families. Later mestizo immigration added a new factor into the local economic and ethnic equation as newcomers competed for the influence previously enjoyed by the established elite. Simultaneously, as the size of the elite grew, the district's limited resources inevitably meant that some sections of these extended families fared better than others. Such differences within Zacapoaxtla's non-Indian society caused tensions that would have considerable political significance in the decades that followed.

These strains were not only evident within single communities, but between the various communities of the district. Cuetzalan's economic marginality had previously meant that Zacapoaxtla authorities need not be unduly concerned with the difficulties that poor communications posed for administrative control. In common with other municipalities in the district, the absence of tax-paying settlers meant that fiscal relations between Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan were primarily limited to the former's role as a regional market for Indian produce, and Cuetzalan's function as a source of tribute and *contribuciones personales*. *Zacapoaxteco* treatment of Cuetzalan's Indian population as racially and economically inferior persisted beyond the arrival of the Flores family and other mestizos.<sup>10</sup> Yet coffee production altered both the ethnic composition of Cuetzalan and the town's economic relationship with Zacapoaxtla. As Cuetzalan developed a degree of economic prosperity, so Zacapoaxtla authorities were keen to ensure that *cuetzaltecos* honoured their fiscal responsibilities. As a result, pre-existing tensions were heightened.<sup>11</sup>

*Cuetzaltecos*, however, were by no means united in their response to pressures from the district capital. As later settlers made their presence felt in the town's social and political life, divisions began to form within Cuetzalan's mestizo society. Originally from the neighbouring district of Tlatlauquitepec,

Miguel Vega and his wife, Epigmenia, moved to Cuetzalan at the turn of the century.<sup>12</sup> Late-comers onto the scene, Vega Bernal was viewed as a threat to the recently acquired prominence of the Flores faction. The ensuing division within Cuetzalan's mestizo society was yet another symptom of a district in transition. Coffee production acted as the nucleus for changes that challenged existing relationships, not only between communities and ethnic groups but also between families and factions within individual settlements.

As the Revolution approached, therefore, both Indian and non-Indian societies in the Zacapoaxtla district had already felt the winds of change. As each new economic or political development reached the region, it was accompanied by fresh jostling for position, each group seeking to gain maximum advantage. The Revolution, then, cannot be said to have acted as a catalyst for change in a previously isolated region. Half a century of changes pre-dated the chaos of revolutionary strife. Given the existence of such friction, it is important to identify the extent to which personal enmity rather than revolutionary ideology decided the manner in which each group reacted to the revolutionary call.

### *Revolutionary sympathies in the district of Zacapoaxtla*

Alcántara, Macip, Molina: such names figure prominently in the lists of the great and good in Zacapoaxtla's history. Bound through marriage and compadrazgo, these families have long dominated economic and political affairs. Yet, by the outbreak of the Revolution, ownership of such illustrious names was no longer a valid ticket to power; half the population of the cabecera could boast tenuous links with these families. Political and economic rivalry was as likely to be found between those sharing the same surnames as from other families

who had emerged to challenge the right of these three families to monopolise the heights of Zacapoaxtla society. Ironically, the name that was to have the most impact in the post-revolutionary years is poorly acknowledged in the *poblano* historiography. The few brief biographical details of the future state governor, Claudio Nabor Tirado, state little more about his early life other than the fact that he was born in Zacapoaxtla.<sup>13</sup> The absence of the name from the annals of Zacapoaxtla's colonial history, however, suggests that Tirado did not belong to the established landed elite.<sup>14</sup> More certain, however, is that by 1920 Claudio Tirado had obtained sufficient prestige within Zacapoaxtla society to attain the position of federal deputy for the district.

Tirado's rise to political influence is not only interesting in itself. The ways in which the white elite of Zacapoaxtla reacted to such a rise helps to clarify the complicated web of loyalties that existed between the more influential families. In the 1920s two major factions existed in Zacapoaxtla. One faction, which would form close ties with Tirado, was personified by the brothers, Wenceslao and Ignacio Macip and their close ally, Rufino A. Landero. The other faction was led by Carlos Macip y Alcántara and Moisés M. Macip.

As far as it affected the Revolution in the district, this factionalism within *zacapoaxteco* society should not be exaggerated. After all, both factions belonged to the same elite to which the prospect of social revolution held little attraction. It is not surprising that the list of *zacapoaxtecos* who heeded Madero's call to arms did not include members of the prominent families. Confirmation of their lack of revolutionary ardour is conveyed in a letter from Moisés Macip's father, Miguel. In petitioning Constitutionalist forces for safe passage to his home in Zacapoaxtla, he argued that although other members of the Macip family were known to be Huertista sympathisers, he and his family were politically neutral.<sup>15</sup> While his deeds might have suggested neutrality,

Miguel Macip's anxiety concerning *agrarista* threats to his land suggests that he, together with other members of the land-owning elite, had much to lose from the successful conclusion of a Revolution that offered land reform.<sup>16</sup> Whether based upon land ownership and/or commerce, the continued dominance of the white elite in Zacapoaxtla depended upon the survival of their monopolistic control over the district's commerce and politics. Revolutionary rhetoric promising greater liberty to the Indian population was deemed a direct threat to a local ethnic balance based upon Indian servility.

If, for much of its history, Zacapoaxtla had been an island of white 'civilization', then late nineteenth century migration to Cuetzalan extended the boundaries of civilization into uncharted waters. The pioneering mestizo settlers in Cuetzalan confronted both physical and legal resistance from the Indian population. The tentative hold that mestizos possessed in Cuetzalan may have contributed to the fact that early settlers were more anxious to present a unified response to Indian challenges than to fight among themselves for the greater share of the yet to be secured spoils. The Flores, Huidobro and Calderón families found themselves in a similar position to that faced by the white elite of Zacapoaxtla two centuries earlier; a vulnerable non-Indian minority in an overwhelmingly Indian environment. As in Zacapoaxtla, such cultural isolation bound the families together and through inter-marriage, these families became a unified dominant force in Cuetzalan politics. By the time mestizos had gained the upper hand in Cuetzalan politics, José María Flores had become a prominent leader of the group.<sup>17</sup> According to his son, Flores was a progressive, liberal-minded cacique. Yet in common with most of his kin in Cuetzalan, José María Flores had little time for the Indian, whom he saw as uncultured and uneducated.<sup>18</sup>



So effectively had the Flores-led group eclipsed Indian influence in Cuetzalan politics, that the main revolutionary threat to its continued prominence came not from the Indian community, but from the mestizo schoolteacher, Miguel Vega, and his sons, Salvador, Victor, Gustavo, Medardo and Rogelio. Flores, like the land-owning elite in Zacapoaxtla, had little to gain from social revolution. He desired progress, but of a type that focused upon economic development that might foster a more favourable climate for his entrepreneurial initiatives. Facing an established clique unwilling to relinquish its newly attained prominence, the Vega Bernals were excluded from the Cuetzalan elite and, therefore, excluded from the economic and political decision-making process. Frustrated by the lack of opportunities for social and economic mobility, Vega Bernal's sons judged that they had little to lose from taking up arms and fighting for change. Whether this was for personal or more ideological reasons is discussed later in the chapter. Although the Vega Bernal brothers posed sufficient a military problem to warrant the deployment of Constitutionalist forces in Cuetzalan, at no time during the Revolution did they succeeded in gaining the upper hand in Cuetzalan. Their key strength lay in the sense of insecurity and uncertainty that their rebel activities created among the dominant families in the area.

The deployment of Barrios' Indian forces to the district in 1919, was greeted with less than enthusiasm.<sup>19</sup> The elite in Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan had little reason to support any side in a guerrilla war which would seriously limit their agricultural and commercial activities. In addition, it should be remembered that they had little regard for their Indian neighbours. The prospect of military and public security affairs being controlled by an illiterate Indian by the name of Barrios must have provoked a frosty, if not hostile, reaction.

This may explain why Barrios had cause to complain to local authorities in Zacapoaxtla for their lack of diligence in ensuring that the municipality's thoroughfares were regularly maintained. The authorities had little incentive to improve the military capabilities of the Indian officer when their underlying desire was for a return to the Porfirian social order. In Cuetzalan, too, the distaste for Barrios' Indian army was evident. In 1919, Demetrio Barrios assumed command of the Constitutionalist garrison in Cuetzalan. He replaced Colonel Celestino Gasca, a white, progressive-minded officer who had gained considerable local respect for his efforts to protect normal social and economic life in the midst of civil war.<sup>20</sup> The prospect of an Indian trying to emulate the role of a cultured officer was too much for Cuetzalan society to bear. While rebel actions were obviously undermining the ability of *cuetzaltecos* to maintain normal economic and social activities, the municipal president complained to Governor Alfonso Cabrera that: '[...] rebel actions were made worse still by the conduct of government troops led by ignorant Indians who used their military might solely to terrorise *gente de razón*'.<sup>21</sup>

Opposition to Barrios in the district generally took the form of non-cooperation rather than violence. The military challenge to Barrios' forces was led by the Vega Bernal, a faction that gained little from the presence of Gasca's troops in Cuetzalan, and that remained marginalised by the ruling Flores faction. Evidence has not been found to indicate exactly when Salvador Vega Bernal and his brothers took up arms, but by February 1918 Constitutionalist forces confirm that they were in rebellion.<sup>22</sup> Nor is there any record of their motives for taking up the Villista cause. Salvador Vega Bernal's son claims that his father became a rebel in 1917 in order to stop the brutal treatment of *cuetzaltecos* by Carrancista forces. Only later, when they received arms and US dollars from Villista forces, did the Vega Bernals assume a revolutionary stance.<sup>23</sup> Baudelio Rivera, a soldier in Vega Bernal's battalion, corroborates this last point. Señor

Rivera states that when Salvador Vega Bernal decided to join the Villista cause, Villa authorised the delivery of a convoy of arms from his division in Veracruz.<sup>24</sup>

The bitterness and disruption of the local revolutionary struggle in the small town of Cuetzalan is revealed from local authority reports:

19 January 1919 - The municipal president reports that eighty troops of the 35o. Batallón [Vega Bernal's forces] had occupy Cuetzalan for a few hours before leaving for an unknown destination.

21 January 1919 - Revolutionary forces led by General Gaviño Vega y Romy, including thirty cavalrymen, pass through Cuetzalan on their way to the coast.

4 February 1919 - Salvador Vega Bernal's troops return to Cuetzalan on 2 February. They comprise 100 well-armed cavalrymen and infantrymen, and had recently withdrawn from the town.

16 February 1919 - Lieutenant Colonel Gabriel Barrios arrives in Cuetzalan with 950 infantry and 150 cavalry, and later head for the Sierra. (All his men are armed with maussers or 30:30 rifles.)

During the following three months, there are similar reports of rebel forces led by the Vega Bernal brothers frequently occupying and terrorising the town of Cuetzalan. There are also details of manoeuvres by Barrios' troops, minor skirmishes and casualties.

30 June 1919 - An ultimatum is given to the municipal president from Salvador Vega Bernal, whose troops occupy the town. The demand calls for the wealthy families and traders to produce a sum of \$1000 within four hours or be considered as enemies of the Villista cause and treated accordingly.

1 July 1919 - The municipal president of Cuetzalan cites the above demand as one of the many intolerable pressures under which the Cuetzalan people have suffered. He adds that the situation is being aggravated by the behaviour of federal forces. The municipal president of Tzicuilan reports that Barrios forces had broken into several homes and forcibly conscripted several local youths into their ranks.

17 July 1919 - 105 rebel troops under Vega Bernal who had occupied Cuetzalan, are forced to withdraw following the arrival of 1500 - 2000 Barrios troops.<sup>25</sup>

These reports portray the local realities of the Revolution. Carranza's rise to the presidency in 1917 was supposed to have heralded the end of the 'violent period' of the Revolution. Yet two years later, Cuetzalan was torn by factionalism. If the violence had ended, no one had informed this corner of the Republic. Guerrilla warfare conducted by Salvador Vega Bernal's troops continued to hamper efforts to bring peace to the district.

The 30 June 1919 raid is of particular interest. Firstly, Salvador Vega Bernal's demands illustrate the difficulty in maintaining normal economic activity. While his victims were the wealthy members of society, examples given in earlier chapters suggest that both Indian and mestizo communities were vulnerable to such raids. Local authorities frequently complained that vecinos cited such disruptions as an excuse for not honouring their fiscal responsibilities. Secondly, that Vega Bernal limited his demands to the wealthier members of Cuetzalan society could be seen as an act of social justice; an attempt to redistribute wealth within an unequal society. To test this hypothesis, however, confronts the fundamental problem of finding reliable evidence to confirm the motives of such groups. Official reports on the actions of Vega Bernal's troops were invariably written by their opponents. Consequently, the Vega Bernals were portrayed as common bandits who used revolutionary titles to legitimate their criminal activity. Equally, Vega Bernal was hardly likely to describe his actions as opportunist or economically motivated, and would more likely have agreed with the sentiments of Baudelio Rivera who in 1993 stated that he fought for Vega Bernal in the name of social justice.<sup>26</sup>

No evidence has been found to confirm that Salvador Vega Bernal's demand of \$1000 was met nor, if it was paid, how Vega Bernal used the money. Yet even if such evidence did exist, it would not help to define the motives of the Vega Bernals' actions. They might have justified the cash demand as a

necessary contribution to the continuing struggle for social justice. Yet, the demand could be seen as little more than an extension of a factional battle. Almost by definition, the targeted vecinos of Cuetzalan belonged to the Flores, Huidobro and Calderón families: the political enemies of the Vega Bernals. From this stand-point, the Vega Bernals' actions, far from being those of social revolutionaries, can be seen as simply those of a faction striving to gain control of local politics.

An interesting contribution to this debate is added by Vega Bernal's son who, with much pride, recalls how his father's troops took just sixteen days to force the Constitutionlists out of Cuetzalan and assume administrative control. Within the context of the political factionalism in Cuetzalan, decisive military action by Salvador Vega Bernal had brought him, albeit temporarily, domination over Flores. If Vega Bernal's son is correct that his father had no ideological motive for taking up arms, it may be that a strong motive to join the Revolution was a mixture of a sense of local injustice and personal ambition. In how many other cases throughout the Republic were 'revolutionaries' moved more by personal rivalry and local grievances than by broader ideologies?<sup>27</sup>

Whatever the Vega Bernals' original motives, the decision to rebel against federal government forces had long-term consequences for the whole region. Their rebel position automatically drove the Flores family into the Constitutionalist camp. The convergence of personal interests with the national cause may not have been too difficult for the Flores family to accept in 1918, when the enlightened, and white, Colonel Gasca commanded the local garrison. It was, however, a little more difficult to swallow in 1919 when the Indian officer, Demetrio Barrios, took over. Ironically, Vega Bernal's rebellious stance eventually forced the mestizo elite of Cuetzalan society to accept that at least one Indian could offer them something that no non-Indian could provide -

local dominance and security of tenure. After all, such an accommodation might not last long. Once hostilities had subsided, surely the Indian troops would be ordered to withdraw to their mountain villages. An alliance with Barrios, therefore, would probably have been viewed by Flores as an expedient, short-term measure, to be discarded when the local situation became more stable.

The Vega Bernals, however, were not totally devoid of support. They enjoyed personal connections with members of the Macip family in Zacapoaxtla and, although not strongly linked, this bond was sufficient for Ignacio Macip to fight alongside Salvador Vega Bernal as one of his senior officers.<sup>28</sup> Such a connection proves that at least one sector of the Macip family was in military combat against the Barrios brothers during the Revolution. The long-term political significance of this association was revealed in a 1923 military investigation which recognised that in the fight for regional domination against Barrios, Claudio Tirado counted upon the staunch support of Ignacio Macip, his brother, Wenceslao, and the Vega Bernal brothers.<sup>29</sup> This link between the Vega Bernals and a Zacapoaxtla faction meant that an influential sector of Zacapoaxtla society not only opposed the Carrancista regime but would, in the future, be embroiled in the local Delahuertista movement. When the Sonorenses administration later began to receive complaints against Barrios' forces from this section of Zacapoaxtla society, it is little wonder that Barrios was so frequently given the benefit of the doubt.

Support for the Vega Bernal rebels set Ignacio and Wenceslao Macip against the dominant faction in Cuetzalan politics. Meanwhile, the other faction in Zacapoaxtla had remained ambiguous in its support for any revolutionary group. Yet, faced with the unlikelihood of a return to the Mexico of 'Don Porfirio', people such as Carlos and Moisés M. Macip probably viewed the

Carrancista option as the least damaging to their considerable interests. The psychological barrier that they and José María Flores had to confront was that Carrancismo in Zacapoaxtla was in the hands of 'illiterate Indians' from Zacatlán.

This dilemma reinforces the need for local studies of the Revolution. The ways in which communities and individuals reacted to the Revolution do not fit simple ideological compartments. Nor can their responses be grouped by social or ethnic criteria. A variety of local factors contributed to Ignacio and Wenceslao Macip becoming political enemies of Gabriel Barrios. Similarly, despite the antipathy towards Indians felt by the non-Indian elites of Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan, local factors combined with broader political and military considerations to produce an alliance with the Indian cacique. Barrios' presence may have been viewed as a necessary short-term evil to counter the persistent challenge of the Vega Bernal, a lesser evil that would go away once the threat had passed. Peace, however, did not fully return to Zacapoaxtla with the death of Carranza. The underlying factionalism that revolutionary action had revealed had yet to be resolved. In this respect, the continued presence in the area of Vega Bernal and Gabriel Barrios prolonged the period during which groups in Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan were forced to compromise in order to retain an influential voice.

*Factionalism in the aftermath of Revolution*

As far as the district of Zacapoaxtla was concerned, the most immediate consequence of Obregón's rise to the presidency was the withdrawal of Barrios' forces to Cuacuila and the assumption of peace-keeping duties by Salvador Vega Bernal. Several months of indecision followed as the Ministry of War reviewed the military sector's future requirements. During this period, Vega Bernal portrayed the Barrios brothers as opponents of the Obregón regime and there were several clashes in the district of Tetela as former enemy troops occupied the same space.<sup>30</sup>

Pacifying regions where the Revolution had merely become a facade behind which factional disputes could be fought was a major problem for the Obregón regime. Although Obregón's advisers warned of the dangers of renewing Barrios' licence to military rule in the Sierra, the possible backlash if Barrios were ordered to disband his troops was too hazardous to contemplate. Even when Obregón supported people like Barrios, there remained the equally awkward problem of placating those forced to demobilise. Obregón's treatment of Vega Bernal demonstrates an attempt at compromise.

Obregón's decision to back Barrios, placed the Vega Bernal brothers in a vulnerable position. With Barrios now licensed to keep the peace throughout the entire Sierra, there was little to stop him crushing his *cuetzalteco* rivals once and for all. Perhaps in recognition of this threat and to maintain a military counter-balance to Barrios, Obregón did not demobilise Vega Bernal's troops but merely recalled them to Cuetzalan where they continued to perform a local public guard duty and remained on the Ministry of War pay-roll. By mid-1921, however, so strong were local complaints against the troops' behaviour, that the Ministry of War ordered Vega Bernal's 350. Batallón to disband.



Vega Bernal responded to the news with two requests that can loosely be viewed as his price for peaceful acquiescence. He asked the Ministry of War to forward \$43,000 for payment of outstanding wages to his troops. Secondly, Vega Bernal argued that he needed to retain an armed escort of forty to fifty men to 'protect my family and interests in the Sierra Norte de Puebla from my political enemies as well as to help conserve law and order within the municipality of Cuetzalan'.<sup>31</sup> The escort, he proposed, should be maintained from Ministry of War funds. Obregón apparently considered the price worth paying; Vega Bernal received an escort of twenty-four men and, although there is no record of a cash payment, Vega Bernal's son states that his father received '20,000 gold coins in recognition of the esteem in which Obregón held him'.<sup>32</sup>

The Sonorenses' weak grip on power during this period undoubtedly required that Obregón conciliate rather than crush his former opponents. In retrospect, the defection of many officers during the Delahuerta rebellion suggests that Obregón was foolhardy to think he could satisfy such diverse interests without further bloodshed. Yet Obregón would have risked jeopardising the fragile peace throughout the Republic had he tried to force the pace of consolidation. Whether by incorporating military leaders of dubious loyalty within the federal army, or accepting compromises that left former rebels such as Vega Bernal with a degree of local influence, the path to lasting peace and stability was far from clearly defined.

The need for national compromise often led to inconclusive local solutions. The factional struggle between Flores and the Vega Bernals continued, with each side gaining temporary ascendancy. While the Flores faction controlled the ayuntamiento, their powers were limited by the presence of Vega Bernal's troops. Under the patronage of governor Manjarrez, Victor Vega Bernal became municipal president and the family strengthened its hold on

local politics. The lynch-pin binding the ascendancy of the Vega Bernals and the governorship of Manjarrez lay in Zacapoaxtla. Wenceslao Macip was the state congress politician who proposed and argued strongly in favour of Manjarrez's appointment as provisional governor.<sup>33</sup> The price for Macip's support probably included approval of Vega Bernal's position as municipal president. It should be remembered that Macip and the Vega Bernals were closely linked, and the flow of patronage from state capital to rural municipality during 1923 appeared to be working efficiently. Of course, patronage demands a price and it is interesting to observe that the Vega Bernal family rallied swiftly to the Delahuertista cause following Manjarrez's decision to lead the state government into rebellion in 1923.

Simmering factional friction continued in Cuetzalan throughout the Vega Bernal period of local authority. In April 1923, following a violent exchange of insults, Flores' ally, José Huidobro, was alleged to have attempted to kill Victor Vega Bernal.<sup>34</sup> Vega Bernal expressed great indignation that Huidobro remained free to walk the streets of Cuetzalan secure in the knowledge that he could rely on the protection of Barrios' troops. These troops had presumably been deployed to the town following the demobilisation of Vega Bernal's 350. Batallón. Victor Vega Bernal claimed that the soldiers were garrisoned at the house of Rosendo M. Calderón for the sole purpose of protecting Flores, Calderón, Huidobro and others of the Flores faction.<sup>35</sup> While Manjarrez remained in power, however, it appears that not even the presence of Barrios' troops was sufficient to end the Vega Bernal family's political supremacy in Cuetzalan.

Yet all was not lost for the Flores faction. Flores' alliance to a man who enjoyed the full support of his military superiors began to bear fruit. Such benefits were evident in the conclusions of the military report in 1923,

concerning the alleged misconduct of Barrios' forces.<sup>36</sup> The report fully supported Barrios, while Ignacio Macip and the Vega Bernals were deemed to have been involved in a range of crimes including the murder of Indians. The report referred to the ruthless political ambitions of the Vega Bernal family and its personal vendetta against José Huidobro. The commission added that the close links between the Huidobro and Flores families were a force for regional progress, and that their association with Gabriel Barrios supported this ambition. It is clear from the report that the *Jefatura* in Puebla, under the command of General Almazán, had little sympathy for the local political affiliates of the acting governor, Manjarrez. Months later, the tension between Almazán and Manjarrez became more public when they became enemies in the Delahuertista uprising.

Salvador Vega Bernal's swift decision to follow Manjarrez's state government into rebellion caused little surprise in the district of Zacapoaxtla. Even before Adolfo de la Huerta's move, several military reports suggested that the Vega Bernals and other ex-revolutionaries were engaged in banditry, even rebellion, in the *tierra caliente*.<sup>37</sup> Although Vega Bernal's right to retain an armed escort was withdrawn in June 1922, allegations of abuses and subversive activities continued.<sup>38</sup> In October 1922, the *Jefatura* in Puebla informed the Ministry of War that rebellion in the *tierra caliente* was imminent and that many in Cuetzalan expected that Salvador Vega Bernal was ready to join the uprising.<sup>39</sup>

Although no clear declaration was ever presented, by December 1923 Salvador Vega Bernal was considered to have joined the Delahuerta cause. Only in April 1924, when the cause was all but lost, did Vega Bernal explain that he had only acted to protect himself from the attacks of Barrios' forces, assaults that were orchestrated by his personal enemy, José María Flores.<sup>40</sup> Less than a

week later, Victor Vega Bernal began to negotiate surrender terms with federal officers. In an audacious request, Vega Bernal demanded that surrender would be conditional upon his troops' safe return to Cuetzalan and payment of \$10,000 in return for weapons and ammunition. Calles refused the request outright. Times had changed. In March 1924 Calles was much more secure in his presidency than Obregón had been during 1921. The rebels returned to Cuetzalan without weapons and without compensation. It appeared that the Vega Bernal threat had finally been tamed.<sup>41</sup>

### *Post-revolutionary reconstruction*

Factional violence and Vega Bernal's decision to join the Delahuertista rebellion, played into the hands of the cacique from Cuacuila. With Barrios now responsible for maintaining regional security, the actions of Vega Bernal's troops gave him a legitimate excuse to cross district and state borders in the pursuit of the Vega Bernals and all other miscreants who threatened stability. In so doing, Barrios was able to expand his control network. Similarly, violence in the district of Zacapoaxtla strengthened Barrios' case for improved communications, the cacique arguing that only through such developments could regional isolation be broken and an effective challenge be mounted against the rebelliousness and indiscipline that such isolation encouraged. Besides, those who helped to construct such vital links needed protection against attacks from the enemies of progress. Hence, 'progress' and 'order' were invoked to justify further military expansion.

The conduit for improved communications in Zacapoaxtla was a road link to connect the railway junction at Zaragoza to the Veracruz coastal town of Tecolutla, passing through Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan. Opposition to the

project came from Zacapoaxtla, Cuetzalan and several Indian communities who argued that they would be detrimentally affected by the road. Zacapoaxtla opposed a project seen as threatening the cabecera's unique economic position as a regional market centre.<sup>42</sup> The road might increase markets for *serrano* produce, but it would also introduce external competition to threaten the Zacapoaxtla elite's trade monopoly. An important element to this argument was Cuetzalan's rising economic independence due to coffee cultivation. Its cooler climate meant that Zacapoaxtla could never become a centre of coffee production; the road project threatened to shift the balance of economic power down the slopes of the Sierra to Cuetzalan.<sup>43</sup>

Certainly both the pre-existing network of communications and those proposed by the white elite in the early 1920s, suggest that Zacapoaxtla was anxious to maintain its strategic economic position. Former communications in the district emphasised this role; a vehicular road connected Zacapoaxtla and the properties of the wealthy with the railway link at Zaragoza, while bridle-paths linked the district cabecera to other municipalities and the *tierra caliente*.<sup>44</sup> The suspension of *faenas* during the Revolution resulted in the serious deterioration of vehicular access between Zaragoza and Zacapoaxtla and bridle-paths were often impassable.

Following the cessation of hostilities, Zacapoaxtla authorities were determined to reaffirm the cabecera's traditional role. In November 1920, the district's federal deputy, Angel Cuevas, suggested that the Zacapoaxtla authorities seek federal funds to repair the road between Zaragoza and Zacapoaxtla.<sup>45</sup> In 1921, the Zacapoaxtla authorities sought state government approval for a scheme to construct a tramway between Zacapoaxtla and Teziutlán, arguing that such a project would bring great commercial benefit.<sup>46</sup> Months later, Barrios' future local ally, Carlos Macip, applied to the state

congress for a concession to construct a rail link between Zaragoza and Zacapoaxtla.<sup>47</sup> All these Zacapoaxtla initiatives aimed to improve the existing communications network between the *llanos*, the cabecera, and the properties of the local elite.

The strong bias towards projects that would reinforce Zacapoaxtla's economic importance adds weight to the suspicion that opposition to the Zaragoza/Tecolutla project was due to protectionism. However, interest in constructing a reliable road from Zaragoza to the *tierra caliente* was nothing new. Federal approval for such a road had been granted in 1876, and *zacapoaxtecos* had explored several possibilities of bringing such plans to fruition. It was even suggested that the two points might be connected by a railway link.<sup>48</sup> In many respects *zacapoaxteco* interest in such communication improvements was a logical development. While the cabecera's former position of economic privilege would have acted to stifle the entrepreneurial instincts of some, others in Zacapoaxtla must have viewed the project with optimism. After all, if the district's economic activities were to increase from a consequent boom in coffee production, then the Zacapoaxtla elite possessed the commercial expertise to capitalise on the region's good fortune.

In addition, Zacapoaxtla's traditional political domination over Cuetzalan could not be lightly dismissed. Even though Cuetzalan showed signs of greater independence, there were still ways in which the Zacapoaxtla elite could make their influence felt. For the Vega Bernals to gain the ascendancy in Cuetzalan, for example, their influence was largely subject to the continued patronage of Ignacio and Wenceslao Macip. Without being directly involved in Cuetzalan, therefore, a Zacapoaxtla faction could still influence politics in the fast developing economy of its neighbouring municipality.

Two issues are raised by following this line of argument. If one of the factions in Zacapoaxtla had moved to control economic developments in Cuetzalan, then it might have been expected that the other faction, led by Carlos and Moisés M. Macip, would have sought links with Flores and Barrios. As will be considered below, this logical step did not occur immediately. The other point to be addressed is, if economic protectionism cannot fully explain Zacapoaxtla's opposition to the road construction plan, what other factors were at play? A petition to the state governor from the municipal president of Cuetzalan in July 1921, provides information that might clarify both issues.

Rosendo Calderón's letter to the governor referred to a project to link Zaragoza to the *tierra caliente*. The scheme, launched to celebrate the centenary of Independence in 1910, achieved great progress before the Revolution suspended construction. Calderón mentioned that during the occupation of Cuetzalan by Demetrio Barrios' forces in 1919, federal finances had been made available to revive the project, only for this work again to be thwarted by regional unrest. Calderón appealed to the governor for financial and moral support to bring this patriotic work to fruition.<sup>49</sup> Responding to the governor's inquiry for background information on the project, the opinions of Zacapoaxtla's municipal president, Moisés Macip, reveal much about how this faction of the Zacapoaxtla elite viewed Barrios, Cuetzalan, and the issue of road construction.

Macip asserted that the Zacapoaxtla authorities were unaware of the project to which Calderón referred. Although acknowledging that some plans had been discussed and that Demetrio Barrios had organised some construction work, Macip was dismissive of the progress made, suggesting that the route was more of a track than a road. Macip was also critical of the methods employed by Barrios' men to obtain the necessary labour. Barrios, he said, had made use of obligatory *faenas* and had charged every trader who used the route to

Zacapoaxtla. Macip recognised the great economic potential that improved communications would bring to the area, but warned that such a huge civil construction project needed government aid and, above all, the voluntary will of the people. *Faenas* were necessary, Macip argued, but could only be obtained through 'moderation, good sense and exquisite tact'.<sup>50</sup>

However, in November 1922, in his capacity as president of the Zacapoaxtla road construction committee, Moisés Macip sent a report to President Obregón relating to work completed on the Zaragoza/Tecolutla road since the project's inception in October 1921. Macip displayed gratitude for the endeavours of deputies Tirado, of Zacapoaxtla and Gutiérrez, of Papantla, in persuading the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas to support the scheme. He also acknowledged José María Flores' capable supervision of the project, and the help that Gabriel and Demetrio Barrios had furnished, both in terms of soldiers and federal aid.<sup>51</sup>

The two examples of Moisés Macip's thoughts on the road project suggest that he was unsure of the stance that he and his faction should adopt. Macip's brusque denial in 1921 of any knowledge of the centennial project clearly contradicted the assertions of Cuetzalan's municipal president, Rosendo Calderón. In addition, Macip's inference that Barrios' crude methods threatened to jeopardise, rather than assist, the success of the project clearly implied that Macip felt that the organisation of labour for the project would be best left in safer hands.

By November 1922, however, the political landscape had changed. The project had been adopted by the federal government and the fact that José María Flores obtained the important post of overall supervisor is indicative of the significant influence Barrios enjoyed in federal government circles. Had Tirado



held as much sway as Moisés Macip's letter suggests it seems inconceivable that Tirado, a politician with close links to the Zacapoaxtla elite, would have allowed the project to fall into *cuetzalteco* control. By then, ties between Flores and Barrios had been substantially strengthened. A mutual interest in progressive development may have sweetened the bitter pill that Flores was forced to swallow by accepting the military support of an Indian in the fight against his local rival, Salvador Vega Bernal.<sup>52</sup>

Such a sweetener might not have been so effective in Zacapoaxtla, where factionalism had never reached the violent heights witnessed in Cuetzalan. The possibility remains that Moisés and Carlos Macip were ambivalent about the road project because the inherent racialism of their society stopped them from giving full support to an initiative led by an Indian cacique. Macip mentioned Flores' capabilities yet only grudgingly acknowledged the role played by the Barrios brothers. This considered, what can be made of Macip's apparent awareness of the rights of Indian communities and the need to gain their co-operation through tact and sensitivity? Such apparent inconsistencies confuse Macip's motivations. The Zacapoaxtla faction may have been concerned by the prospect of an Indian controlling events, but their earlier objections may equally have been provoked by the fact that the project firmly placed the focal point of regional development into the hands of the Flores faction in Cuetzalan. Furthermore, in doing so, both factions within the Zacapoaxtla elite were being denied the traditional control that they had previously exercised over the labour potential existing in local Indian communities. A mixture of racism, neighbourly rivalry and fears of losing control of Indian labour appears to have influenced Macip's actions.

Part of Moisés Macip's report to Obregón in 1922 helps to clarify his position. Referring to the rumour that the road would only benefit the white elite, Macip commented:

Nothing is more false than the rumour disseminated by unworthy people. The road under construction IS NOT A PRIVATE ROAD NOR FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF ANY COMPANY OR CORPORATION; from the very beginning, this project was given the name of 'ZARAGOZA - TECOLUTLA NATIONAL HIGHWAY' a name that clearly indicates that the highway is for 'PUBLIC' vehicular service and not a facility that will be monopolised by any one group.

Unfortunately these misconceptions have found space to develop in the majority of communities, where, due to custom and lack of exchange in ideas, the people do not recognise the means by which they will achieve the well-being of everyone; stubborn in the love of their native soil, they believe that whatever form of civilisation is introduced, represents a direct threat to their interests.<sup>53</sup>

Macip depicts a district in a process of transformation. Economic and demographic change had already taken place before the Revolution. The introduction of coffee had required that Cuetzalan Indians lose some of their land, their political autonomy, and that many Indians turn to coffee farming in order to pay their *contribuciones personales*. The Zaragoza/Tecolutla road project accentuated these effects and placed considerable strain on Indian families by requiring them to give their free labour towards its construction.

The road project, therefore, brought into question the established pattern of inter-ethnic relations in the Sierra. Many non-Indians saw the road as a progressive move, but was this concept of progress shared by Indian communities? The white elites who argued that forced *faenas* breached the campesinos' constitutional rights may have acted as paternal protectors of their Indian neighbours. Yet their expressed concern could equally have been a facade disguising opposition to change, and/or to Barrios. Furthermore, should one accept the view that Indian communities were static, vulnerable victims of mestizo progress? Leaders such as Juan Francisco Lucas and Francisco Agustín

Dieguillo proved themselves capable of utilising nineteenth century liberalism to their advantage. Surely their descendants would have inherited a similar political awareness and insisted on concessions in return for labour?

*Ethnic relations in a time of transition*

On 14 November 1921, President Obregón received the following telegramme from Feliciano Tapia, José Baez and other Cuetzalan Indians:

We have the honour of informing you, Señor President, that by the arbitrary orders of General Gabriel Barrios, we are being forced to give two days of *faenas* each week for the construction of the national highway. The construction site is approximately twenty kilometres from our town. A list is to be taken of all those who refuse to attend *faenas* in order that the said officer can take measures against them. In the interests of federal justice, we strongly implore you to give our case the urgency it deserves so that we can enjoy the guarantees that the Constitution affords defenceless people, whose race continues to suffer the exploitation experienced by our people since the time of the conquest.<sup>54</sup>

Obregón replied that he could not intervene in '*asuntos de naturaleza*', and added that it was the duty of all Mexicans to co-operate with the construction of much needed roads.

The Zaragoza/Tecolutla road project presented the greatest challenge to ethnic relations in the district of Zacapoaxtla since the *desamortización* and the introduction of coffee. Either by persuasion or force, Indian communities were required to adopt the enthusiasm for progress that had captured the minds of the district's non-Indian elite. As Moisés Macip's report implied, by 1922 resistance to *faenas* had already become a problem. Macip believed this resistance to be based upon an ill-conceived notion that the road would only benefit the white race. Whether or not this was the case, petitions such as the

one sent by *cuetzalteco* Indians created the impression that they viewed *faenas* as a return to a form of exploitation that the Revolution had supposedly eradicated.

The start of work on the road allowed local intellectuals the opportunity to display their knowledge of worldly matters. A month after the project commenced, Profesores Efraín Bonilla and Carlos Barrios (no relation) published propaganda in support of the scheme. (see Appendix IV.) As would Moisés Macip a year later, they emphasised the commercial opportunities that the road would bring for all serranos. They criticised local opponents of progress, likening them to those 'uneducated campesinos' in other areas who had used arms to stop railway tracks crossing their land. Their message was clear: ignorance could not be used as a barrier to progress, 'now is not the time for man to remain in savage isolation, but a time for reconciliation, understanding and civilisation'.<sup>55</sup> Yet there was no sign that such mutual understanding would be achieved through compromise on the part of the non-Indian. It was the Indian who was required to show flexibility. Sections of the white elite in Zacapoaxtla, carrying the banner of progress, had begun an assault upon their insularity.

These publications failed to identify exactly who was responsible for spreading propaganda against the road project. It is clear from their rhetoric, however, that the local intelligentsia deemed the backward mentality of the Indian communities as a fertile ground upon which such opposition might thrive. Yet how could the Indian communities be persuaded to turn away from previous isolation? Reflecting the complaints made against Demetrio Barrios by the vecinos of Nauzontla, Moisés Macip clearly counselled a more tactful approach to foster co-operation and mutual understanding. His obvious inference was that such an approach would be better conducted by those who had always negotiated issues relating to Indian labour provision; the white elite.

The Nauzontla vecinos typified the tenor of road-related complaints made by Indian communities. Demetrio Barrios was accused of forcing Indians to work on the road construction without wages or compensation for property that was damaged or destroyed. Vecinos cited a recent concession allowing a mestizo trader to operate a transport business along the road as confirmation of their suspicions that the sole benefactors of the project would be the white minority. Demetrio Barrios and his troops were said to have used threats to persuade vecinos to withdraw their complaints.<sup>56</sup>

Nauzontla's concerns were temporarily resolved when Demetrio Barrios' forces withdrew from the area a month later and Vega Bernal's troops assumed military control. Yet, although Barrios' methods may have been controversial, what alternative methods could have convinced Indian communities to co-operate with the construction project? In October 1920, the municipal president of Zacapoaxtla instructed the local authorities in Cuetzalan, Nauzontla and Xochitlán to organise *faenas* to carry out repairs to local thoroughfares. The authorities of Xochitlán, less than two kilometres from Nauzontla, reported considerable vecino resistance and asked for help to ensure compliance. Within a week, Vega Bernal had dispatched ten armed soldiers from Cuetzalan and the authorities in Xochitlán reported that repair work would shortly commence.<sup>57</sup>

Occasionally, the advocates of voluntary co-operation were prepared to use coercion, at other times a more conciliatory approach was adopted. As municipal president of Cuetzalan, Victor Bernal advised Moisés Macip that he had successfully convinced those opposing *faenas* to change their stance. In return, Vega Bernal agreed that the presence of armed guards during the days of *faenas* was both unnecessary and contributed towards making *faeneros* feel like criminals. In addition, Vega Bernal reported that although the vecinos would give weekly *faenas* for the maintenance of local thoroughfares, they were only

prepared to give monthly *faenas* for the national highway project.<sup>58</sup> Again, the apparent reticence of vecinos to provide *faenas* that were not directly linked to their own region is evident, even though the national highway passed within a few kilometres of their communities. The extra burden was seen as another means by which the mestizo exploited the Indian. While the strength of the Indians argument cannot be denied, the labour demands for such an ambitious project made the offer of monthly *faenas* a totally inadequate response. The federal government adopted the project largely because it was assured that the serranos would give their voluntary labour towards the road's construction. If, however, such labour was limited to monthly *faenas*, the subsequent delay in completion would seriously jeopardise continued federal support for the scheme.

Victor Vega Bernal's comments suggest that he shared the sentiments expressed by Moisés Macip: that the co-operation of the Indian communities could only be obtained through compromise and mutual understanding. Does this apparent concern for the Indian communities confirm the Vega Bernals' position as rebels fighting for social justice? The main evidence opposing this view comes from Indian complaints made against the Vega Bernal family at the 1923 military enquiry.<sup>59</sup> But these examples alone cannot be used to condemn the Vega Bernals. It has already been suggested that the enquiry was biased towards Barrios. Furthermore, the majority of the complaints lacked corroboration and this suggests that they may have been manufactured by the Flores family as part of a wider campaign to undermine the Vega Bernals' position within the community.

Nevertheless, one example does merit closer attention because it provides clues of the true nature of the Vega Bernals' relationship with local Indians. In October 1921, vecinos of Cuetzalan protested in the name of '13,000 Indians across the Sierra who had suffered four years of atrocities by Salvador Vega

Bernal's forces, who were acting under the guise of revolutionaries'. Vega Bernal's forces were accused of rape, murder and all manner of robberies. These abuses were contrasted with the brief respite when Barrios' forces controlled the area. Demetrio Barrios had organised the opening of fifteen schools in the area, which were later closed by the Vega Bernals.<sup>60</sup>

This accusation, in itself, is no different from others sent by vecinos of Cuetzalan, and an element of political manipulation by Flores cannot be ruled out. Replying to the accusations, Salvador Vega Bernal denied that any abuses had occurred since May 1920, but conceded that some Indians may have suffered during the Revolution. He argued that such were the unfortunate, but inevitable, consequences of war. Vega Bernal acknowledged the support that Barrios had enjoyed within Indian communities during the Revolution, citing this as the reason for treating such communities as enemies of the Villista cause.<sup>61</sup>

No matter how inadvertently, Vega Bernal's explanation of his actions only serves to condemn him. By acknowledging the widespread support for Barrios during the Revolution, credence is given to the view that Barrios was a positive influence in the area. Equally significant is Vega Bernal's admission that, in the past, his men may have committed abuses against Indian communities. It was somewhat naive of Vega Bernal to think that when the Revolution ended, he could resume a cordial relationship with the same communities. Obregón may have called for national reconciliation, but sentiments of anger and resentment could not easily be forgotten. Those who had suffered at the hands of the Vega Bernals would have been dismayed to learn that Salvador Vega Bernal had been permitted an armed escort, and that his brothers occupied positions of authority in Cuetzalan. In such an atmosphere, the Vega Bernals could hardly portray themselves as the champions

of the exploited Indian. Of the hundred men that Salvador Vega Bernal mustered during the raid on Cuetzalan in June 1919, no conclusive evidence has been found regarding the composition of the force. Some, like Baudelio Rivera, were undoubtedly employees of the family who followed the Vega Bernals into battle. There is also evidence that members of the white elite and mestizos from Zacapoaxtla joined the force. There is little evidence, however, of any significant support from Indian communities.

Given Salvador Vega Bernal's antagonistic relationship with some Indian communities, it is plausible that his expressed concern for the exploitive nature of *faenas* was merely a screen to hide more personal motives. This does not mean that he was opposed to the project; indeed, as he himself pointed out, as a businessman he stood to gain from the increased markets that the road would facilitate.<sup>62</sup> He would have been dismayed, however, by the degree of influence gained by his political opponents as a result of José María Flores' central role in the scheme. Vega Bernal's fears were compounded by the deployment of federal forces to safeguard the road construction. Such a development would bring Barrios forces back into the district and their presence would strengthen the political prominence that Flores enjoyed.

Motives did exist, therefore, for mestizos to incite Indian communities to reject the road project. To test this hypothesis and to gauge the degree of genuine Indian resistance to *faenas*, it is necessary to analyse more closely the nature of Indian opposition. Considering the large number of affected Indian communities in the Zacapoaxtla district, very few Indians ever objected to the road construction project. Of those who did, excepting the two cases from the nearby municipalities of Nauzontla and Xochitlán, all other complaints emanated from Cuetzalan. These complaints were made at times when the Vega Bernals held political control; either during the post-revolutionary phase that preceded



the Delahuerta uprising, or during the governorship of Claudio Tirado in 1925.<sup>63</sup> Circumstantial evidence, therefore, suggests that 'Indian' complaints attacking Barrios' use of *faenas* were, at the very least, encouraged by his non-Indian political opponents.

The poverty of complaints from Indian communities regarding the road project may simply have been due to their inability to get their voices heard. Petitions called for considerable organisation and ayuntamientos who supported Barrios would have been unlikely to respond positively. Furthermore, the presence of Barrios' troops and *cuerpos voluntarios* may have persuaded communities to remain silent.<sup>64</sup> So complete may this intimidation have been, that even when the Vega Bernals were able and willing to forward such complaints, few communities had the courage to act. Yet the absence of any protests, even anonymous complaints, suggests that Indian resistance to the road project was not widespread. Even in 1930, when Almazán's state government actively encouraged serranos to register complaints against Barrios' caciquismo, there was no surge of complaints from the Indian communities in the Zacapoaxtla district.

*Faenas* appear not to have been as much a source of Indian resentment as the Vega Bernals, Wenceslao and Ignacio Macip, and Claudio Tirado sought to portray. There is a strong suspicion, therefore, that Barrios' opponents exaggerated this resentment, using it as a weapon in a political conflict in which the Indian was a bystander. Given the magnitude of the Indian communities affected by *faenas*, very few refused to provide labour and even less sought to use their guarantees under the Constitution to argue that *faenas* were illegal. Yet neither can it be assumed that Indian communities were mere pawns in a mestizo political game. Thomson's work on the nineteenth century clearly shows that Indian communities used their potential to provide military service as

a means to secure local objectives. Similarly, under Gabriel Barrios, they expected to be shown favour in return for their loyalty. In this respect, it is inconceivable to imagine that in acquiescing over *faenas*, Indian communities would not have sought similar concessions. Yet the tendency for communities to focus their anxieties upon local issues has already been discussed, and this meant that the concessions that each community sought would reflect this limited vision of the world. The interests of a community trying to sustain cultural isolation, for example, were different from those communities that had accepted a measure of integration with the non-Indian world beyond.

The small number of genuine Indian objections to *faenas* suggests that Barrios adopted a flexible approach in convincing various communities to co-operate. How did this work in practice? It will be remembered that the strength of the Barrios cacicazgo depended upon his ability to identify and incorporate more co-operative sections of a given community within his network of patronage. In communities where factions disposed to greater integration already existed, the imminent construction of the road would have encouraged them to become more apparent. By backing such groups, Barrios could swiftly influence a community's attitudes towards the road project without having to use coercion or direct interference in a community's internal politics. Such a tactic appears to have taken place in Xochitlán where, in 1920, the vecinos had been hostile to demands for *faenas* on the national highway project. Six years later, however, the ayuntamiento of Xochitlán wrote a letter to Demetrio Barrios thanking him and his troops for their efforts to bring progress to the Sierra and pledging their loyalty and support for any future initiatives.<sup>65</sup> It is obvious that those who had acquired a leading position within the community had managed to steer the community towards co-operation rather than confrontation.

Detailed evidence of how Barrios transformed public opinion in Xochitlán has not been found, but assuming he used methods similar to those employed elsewhere in the Sierra, then he would have sought a faction within the community with whom he could do business. More recent studies in the community of Xalacapan confirm the vital role that factionalism played in serrano communities. When César Espínola began his study of Xalacapan in 1961, he found a community in transition. Its proximity to the cabecera of Zacapoaxtla and to the Zaragoza/Tecolutla national highway had evidently exposed Xalacapan to the modernising influences of the non-Indian world. Yet important community decisions remained strongly influenced by tradition. César Espínola perceived substantial resistance to any incorporation of the Indian culture within a homogeneous national identity. Forty years after Zacapoaxtla's intellectuals had called for racial integration, Xalacapan was holding firm.

Torres Trueba's study on factionalism in 1968 found that the battle between modernity and tradition in Xalacapan had become more defined.<sup>66</sup> Factions were either in defence of cultural isolation or pushing for greater integration into the exterior capitalist system. It appeared as though the latter group held the upper hand: certain individuals within Xalacapan had become bilingual and had developed economic and personal ties with mestizos in Zacapoaxtla. Such people were prepared to forsake their cultural restraints in exchange for the economic and social rewards that came from ties with the mestizo world. It is precisely this kind of division within an Indian community that Barrios sought to exploit. Incorporation of such groups into the cacicazgo placed them in a strong position to persuade their community to respond positively to Barrios' proposals.

Just as Xalacapan had undergone a period of transition with regards to its relations with the non-Indian world, so Barrios would have confronted other communities that were more hostile to outside interference. The lack of protests from such communities suggests that Barrios found an acceptable compromise that left local autonomy intact while, nonetheless, securing labour for road construction. During the 1960s, anthropological evidence suggests that the isolationist mentality that Barrios confronted forty years earlier was still a feature of serrano life. Lourdes-Arizpe's study of Zacatipan reveals that strong suspicion existed concerning the motives for a proposal to link the community to the national highway.<sup>67</sup> Yet even in communities such as Zacatipan, underlying political and economic subordination to the cabecera of Cuetzalan forced compromises. Even though the community was essentially monolingual and mono-cultural, the key position of secretary was usually held by someone who was bilingual; someone who would best be able to protect the community's interests in the broader world. In addition, it was an economic imperative for those in Zacatipan who wished to trade in Cuetzalan to establish links with the cabecera's traders. With economic and political power often inextricable, for a Zacatipan trader to gain, for example, a licence to sell *aguardiente*, he had to pledge his political support to a certain group in Cuetzalan. Economic realities gave *cuetzaltecos* a political influence within Zacatipan without the need for more obvious intervention. In return, Zacatipan traders may have conceded a little, but did not jeopardise the community's underlying sense of cultural autonomy.

The compromises made in Zacatipan in the 1960s may have been similar to those made by many serrano communities in the 1920s who viewed loyalty to Barrios as a necessary evil to reduce yet greater assaults upon their limited autonomy. Barrios did not attempt to dominate each and every aspect of serrano life. Even had he wanted to, he lacked the resources and control network to

accomplish such a feat. What he did demand, however, was a certain level of co-operation from serrano communities. Whether to suppress banditry, build a school, give political support during elections, or to provide *faenas* for the national highway, such demonstrations of co-operation were the price that Barrios demanded for his benevolence. Providing these demands were met, serrano villages were allowed to retain a large degree of autonomy. In this way, Barrios was able to gain influence not only in communities that embraced greater integration, but also in those that wished to retain a measure of independence.

If the argument that Indian co-operation in the construction of the national highway did not necessarily signify support for the scheme, then the difficult issue relating to cultural perceptions of 'progress' becomes obsolete. Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos, in Mexico City, newspapers and state government in Puebla City, and local intellectuals in Zacapoaxtla all agreed that the Zaragoza/Tecolutla project was an essential step in bringing progress to the Sierra de Puebla. Yet the term 'progress', as defined by the non-Indian authorities and shared by Barrios, meant greater integration within the mainstream culture and economy. It is clear from more recent anthropological studies that although Nahuatl and Totonac views of the world were incompatible with twentieth century notions of progress, nevertheless Indian communities have been able to come to terms with external pressures.<sup>68</sup> If the Zacatipan community is used as a model, then the attendance of *faenas* may have been seen as a means of placating an external mestizo world rather than a route to cultural self-destruction; a compromise designed to preserve a measure cultural autonomy rather than to hasten its demise.<sup>69</sup>

*Local skirmishes in a broader political conflict*

If Salvador Vega Bernal's military career was one of fighting a losing battle against ever greater odds, his subsequent political prominence suggests that he was a survivor. His political career continued long after Barrios' retirement from active military service in 1941. Ironically, Vega Bernal and Barrios' half-brother, Elpidio, would share the public forum during the 1951-4 State legislature when both were deputies for Sierra districts.<sup>70</sup>

The Vega Bernal family, however, did not emerge from the bitter factionalism unscathed. In October 1923, vecinos of the *barrio* of Xocoyolo, Cuetzalan, found the body of Rogelio Vega Bernal lying in a ditch.<sup>71</sup> He had been shot several times and, although a local man was accused of his murder, some vecinos later claimed that Barrios was behind the assassination.<sup>72</sup> Nor was Rogelio the only Vega Bernal casualty. In March 1927, Miguel Vega Bernal, father of the brothers, was gunned down in the streets of Zacapoaxtla. It was suggested that he was a victim of the on-going factional dispute in Cuetzalan, although no evidence of the Flores faction's involvement in the killing was ever produced.<sup>73</sup>

In the early 1920s, the Flores and Vega Bernal factions continued their struggle for control of the municipality of Cuetzalan. As was seen during Manjarrez's governorship, the Vega Bernals were at their strongest when their political allies in Zacapoaxtla enjoyed influence within state government. During the Delahuerta rebellion, the factional struggle abandoned its political guise and the military conflict between Salvador Vega Bernal and Barrios resumed. Throughout the rebellion, the Vega Bernals maintained their links with Wenceslao and Ignacio Macip. In the future, Flores would use this to cast doubt upon *zacapoaxtecos'* loyalty to the Sonorenses.

Rogelio Vega Bernal's assassination on the eve of rebellion, and Salvador's surrender in 1924, seemed to mark the family's final military defeat, thus securing Flores' domination of Cuetzalan politics. Thanks to the changing fortunes of state politics, however, Salvador Vega Bernal once more rose from the ashes. Following the two week interim governorship of Wenceslao Macip in February 1925, Claudio Tirado assumed the governorship of Puebla, a position he retained for two years. One of Tirado's first acts as governor was to appoint Wenceslao Macip as General Secretary of the state government and Rufino Landero as his Chief Clerk. The move confirms the substantial trust that Tirado placed in his Zacapoaxtla political allies.<sup>74</sup> Tirado's political hold appeared all the more complete as Ignacio Macip had been elected as state deputy for Zacapoaxtla in 1924, despite attempts by Barrios' forces to prevent him winning.<sup>75</sup>

Barrios' failure to stop Ignacio Macip's election indicates that, when faced with a hostile state government, Barrios' position in the Sierra was noticeably weakened. Upon assuming power in Puebla, Tirado took immediate steps to regain some of the regional influence lost to Barrios and Flores as a result of their control of the national highway project. On 14 February 1925, Tirado's government nullified the recent municipal elections in Cuetzalan, claiming that the pro-Flores group had fraudulently taken control of the *ayuntamiento*. Anticipating state government intervention, Flores and others approached President Calles alleging that Tirado had fabricated complaints against the *ayuntamiento* as a pretext to impose a local authority servile to his demands.<sup>76</sup>

The ensuing political battle was characterised by claims and counter-claims of abuses by both political factions. On 30 April 1925 *vecinos* of Cuetzalan complained that Barrios troops had forced them at gun-point to give

*faenas* for the construction of the national highway. The vecinos repeated an earlier suspicion that the road was purely for the benefit of Flores. Flores was depicted as a cacique sustained by the *defensa social*, a group of local thugs who had the backing of both Barrios and General Almazán. A further letter from vecinos of Cuetzalan reported the return of José Huidobro, a man who had been removed from the area due to his abuses of power when leader of the same *defensa social* group. The accusation that the road project would only benefit Flores and his political friends was repeated.<sup>77</sup>

Evidence that the dispute extended beyond the municipality of Cuetzalan is provided in a letter sent by Mario Molina to Flores in June 1925. Molina, a resident of Zacapoaxtla, reminded Flores that in the recent elections he had campaigned hard in support of Barrios' candidate. However, since Tirado had become governor, Tirado's family and compadres had used their positions of local authority to threaten him. Molina asked Flores to obtain Barrios' permission to carry arms for self-defence. He added that fifty youths in Zacapoaxtla had expressed the desire to join Barrios' forces. Molina could vouch for their loyalty and asked Flores to seek Barrios' response to their request.

Molina's letter to Flores sheds more light on political events in Zacapoaxtla. Molina warned Flores that although Barrios had helped Carlos Macip Jnr. to become a deputy in the past, in the recent elections Macip had co-operated with other Macips to ensure Tirado's victory. In addition, Molina warned that Ricardo Macip had recruited a local *defensa social* group in Zacapoaxtla. Molina predicted that Tirado would use the group's existence to argue against the need for continued deployment of federal troops to ensure public security. The consequential removal of Barrios' forces from the area



would, Molina feared, be a disaster for Barrios' influence in the region and would allow Tirado and the Macips to gain full control of the district.<sup>78</sup>

In an atmosphere of rising political tension, the Puebla press joined the attack against the methods used by Barrios and Flores to secure labour for road construction. Flores informed Calles that the press attacks were the result of misinformation dispersed by 'those in Zacapoaxtla who are the enemies of Cuetzalan and the road project and who, now that they have acquired positions of responsibility in the state government, are using their powers to increase their attacks on the forces of progress'. Less than two weeks later, Demetrio Santa Fe reported that Salvador Vega Bernal was spreading Delahuertista propaganda in Zacapoaxtla and had attracted much support among exiled *cuetzaltecos* by his promise that the first action in his military campaign would be against the hostile authorities in Cuetzalan.<sup>79</sup>

In August 1925 Tirado took decisive action. In an explanatory letter to President Calles, Tirado referred to the previous illegal seizure of municipal authority in Cuetzalan and the mounting pressure upon him to rectify the situation. In response, Tirado had sent a government official, accompanied by fifteen mounted police, to Cuetzalan with orders to remove the ayuntamiento, to restore law and order, and to install a legally recognised municipal authority. He asked Calles to order the *Jefatura* to ensure that Barrios' troops would facilitate the smooth transition of authorities.<sup>80</sup>

Barrios dared not risk the consequences of obstructing a military force with the backing of the state government. Felipe Ortiz, municipal president of the Flores-backed ayuntamiento, appealed to Calles against the imposition of what he saw as an immoral, Delahuertista ayuntamiento and reported that he, his ayuntamiento and 680 *cuetzaltecos* had withdrawn from the town and had taken

refuge on the Ranch of Casastepec, two kilometres from Cuetzalan. In addition, the mothers, wives and daughters of the Flores faction asked Calles to help restore the legal authorities to Cuetzalan and to order the withdrawal of the state mounted police.<sup>81</sup>

Throughout the following year, accusations and counter-accusations were made as both factions in Cuetzalan attempted to convince the federal authorities of the validity of their claims. Tirado warned that Flores' *defensa social* in Casastepec, represented a constant threat to peace. Meanwhile vecinos in Cuetzalan congratulated President Calles on his decision not to interfere in state affairs; to have done so would have seriously increased the likelihood of again subjecting the town to the military caciquismo of Flores.<sup>82</sup> Flores and the deposed municipal president, Ortiz, accused Tirado and his supporters of fabricating accusations. They repeated that friction in Cuetzalan was due to the political intrigues of a group in Zacapoaxtla which, together with Tirado, was determined to suspend the construction of the national highway project.<sup>83</sup> The Flores faction was trying hard to bind the local political dispute to factors of national policy.

An interesting phase of the conflict occurred in October 1925. From correspondence between Flores and Barrios, it appears that Tirado was prepared to compromise in order to resolve the situation in Cuetzalan. He proposed a plebiscite which would, presumably, have let the *cuetzaltecos* decide their own future. The Barrios camp appeared to accept the suggestion, provided the state's mounted police be withdrawn from the town ten days before the plebiscite. As Flores awaited a response from Tirado, he expressed doubt whether the compromise would be accepted as '[Rufino] Landero and [Wenceslao] Macip are opposed to it'.<sup>84</sup> Flores considered both men to hold such influence over Tirado as to veto any proposal that might have resolved the dispute in

Cuetzalan. That no evidence exists of the acceptance of the revised proposal suggests that Flores was correct in his assessment.

The battle for control of Cuetzalan was, of course, a symptom of the broader political struggle between Tirado and Barrios. With federal elections looming in 1926, the centre of friction switched from Cuetzalan to Zacapoaxtla. Ignacio Macip claimed he had been the victim of political intrigue orchestrated by Barrios: an accusation that was emphatically denied by Barrios' superior officer in Puebla, General Amaya. For good measure, Amaya advised President Calles that the Macip brothers were implicated in several disturbances in Zacapoaxtla, including the fatal shooting of a youth. Obviously, Amaya was keen to support his military commander in the Sierra.<sup>85</sup>

Amaya's account of the situation was reiterated in a complaint from Ignacio Macip's political rival in Zacapoaxtla, Constantino Molina. Molina asked Calles to help prevent the Macip brothers' unlawful attempts to prolong their nepotistic control of political and military authority. Molina directly implicated the Macips to the Delahuertista cause, and suggested that despite their considerable influence in the region, the Macips were unpopular throughout the state of Puebla. As candidate for the Alliance of Socialist Parties, Molina appealed to the president to deploy federal forces to uphold the law and ensure that fair elections took place.<sup>86</sup> Molina's appeal appears to have found favour. Two weeks later the Zacapoaxtla ayuntamiento complained that Barrios forces had arrived in the city and were working to ensure Constantino Molina's election. In this, Barrios received the full support of the *Jefatura* in Puebla who confirmed that the deployment of his forces was in response to complaints regarding the abuses committed by the Macip brothers.<sup>87</sup> Molina was duly elected deputy to the federal congress for the district of Zacapoaxtla for the period 1926-30.

The battle between Tirado and Barrios for control of the district began to drift away from the governor. With the Ministry of War supporting Barrios' presence in Zacapoaxtla, and with Lombardo Toledano and the pro-Barrios bloc in federal congress baying for Tirado's blood, Tirado's position was desperate. On 16 August 1926, Tirado sent Calles a list of communiques from serrano ayuntamientos seeking remedies for the actions of Barrios' forces. These appeals included two telegrammes from Zacapoaxtla reporting that Barrios' men had entered Cuetzalan, arrested several members of the ayuntamiento and, on 13 August 1926, had disbanded the state-imposed authorities.<sup>88</sup> Barrios confirmed that the ayuntamiento had been forced to step down but explained that this was a result of the spontaneous action of a community tired of the abuses of the officials. Barrios added that the vecinos of Cuetzalan had forced the officials and their supporters out of town and they were presently taking refuge in Zacapoaxtla where they continued to make false accusations against him and his troops.<sup>89</sup> General Amaya forwarded Barrios' reply to Calles in a letter that contained the damning footnote: 'If all your supporters worked with the loyalty and sincerity that señor Tirado displays, then your Supreme Government would be lost and the Revolution would fall into the most sorrowful collapse.'<sup>90</sup>

Nonetheless, Calles was sufficiently worried by Tirado's accusations to order an investigation conducted by Francisco Heredia. Referring to events in the Zacapoaxtla district, Heredia confirmed that Tirado's claims were fundamentally accurate. The previous ayuntamiento in Cuetzalan had been forced out of office by an armed group and were taking refuge in Zacapoaxtla together with fifty former vecinos. Heredia added that such an occurrence was not uncommon in the Sierra where rival factions strove for local supremacy. Heredia added that Barrios' forces, if not actively involved in such actions themselves, were at least allowing pro-Barrios groups to terrorise factions loyal to Tirado.<sup>91</sup>

Despite Heredia's report, as discussed in chapter four, Barrios ultimately triumphed over Tirado and his enemies in Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan. Ignacio Macip's influence as deputy in the state congress was severely curtailed following Tirado's removal from the governorship. Similarly on Tirado's removal, Rufino Landero and Wenceslao Macip lost their positions of influence in state government. With the anti-Barrios faction in Zacapoaxtla on the retreat, the Vega Bernals found their ability to resist the Flores faction weakened. It was during this period that Miguel Vega Bernal was gunned down in the streets of Zacapoaxtla. With Tirado deposed and with Barrios deputies lodged in state and federal congresses, there was no serious challenge to Barrios' influence in the Zacapoaxtla district until 1929, when the governorship of Leonides Almazán heralded a more comprehensive attempt to dismantle the cacicazgo.

### *Broader applications*

A brief case study can not address the full complexity of Barrios' influence in the Zacapoaxtla district. This analysis has concentrated upon key moments, players and issues within the district's history during the 1920s which shed light on how Barrios controlled the Sierra.<sup>92</sup>

Much of the discussion has revolved around the construction of the Zaragoza/Tecolutla road. The project, and the wider programme of regional development that it represented, were crucial in Barrios' battle to retain the support of his military and political superiors. Similar schemes were conducted throughout the Sierra and, as discussed in the previous chapter, the image of Barrios as a dynamic symbol of revolutionary progress was vital to his quest for regional dominance.

From a local perspective, developments such as the Zaragoza/Tecolutla project permitted Barrios to extend his military presence and political patronage. Under the guise of sustaining the progressive impulse of the Revolution, Barrios was able to deploy troops to 'protect' *faeneros* and provide technical and logistical support. *Defensas sociales* were formed to help 'local men of progress' ensure that the campesinos' 'voluntary desire' to co-operate with these projects was respected. Thus, the extension of the cacicazgo paralleled the advance of revolutionary progress.

The road project provoked debate and division within Indian communities and non-Indian cabeceras alike. Barrios used these issues to identify the more amenable sector of society and, through patronage, ensured that his friends became the dominant voice in any given community. The nature of this process depended upon each local situation. Across the Sierra in Amixtlán, where the Galindo family held a similar position to that enjoyed by the white elites in Zacapoaxtla, no internal division existed. The Galindos agreed to support Barrios' regional domination and his proposals to construct a national highway that would pass through Amixtlán on its way to the coast. The reward for their loyalty was that afforded to any faithful, influential supporters of the cacicazgo. Members of the family received Barrios' backing for their political aspirations while others became *gente de confianza*, *jefes de armas*, holding on to their existing powers.

In Zacapoaxtla, divisions within the elite and between the district capital and coffee-rich Cuetzalan, prevented such an easy accommodation with Barrios. Centuries of white supremacy and Zacapoaxtla's fear of losing control to Cuetzalan, prevented such a move. Yet, as Flores would realise, federal government backing meant that Barrios could no longer be ignored. Carlos and Moisés Macip crossed the same ethnic barrier as Flores, the decisive saving

grace being a common interest in economic development. Just as a mix of personal ambitions combined to persuade some to join Barrios, these same incentives convinced others that their future lay elsewhere. As Heredia's report suggested, this dilemma faced most groups with political aspirations in the Sierra: to pledge loyalty to Barrios or to the governor.

Anthropological studies in the 1960s confirm that the absorption of Indian culture into a hybrid national mestizo identity remained more a central government ideal than a reality. It is unlikely that these same Indian communities were any more culturally integrated forty years earlier. Most Indian communities in the Sierra remained on the margins of the processes of modernisation found in post-revolutionary Mexico. A degree of economic and bureaucratic integration had existed for centuries, but the general trend was a stubborn defense of local autonomy, no matter how limited that might be. It can be assumed, therefore, that excepting communities whose property was directly affected by the project, most Indian communities viewed the Zaragoza/Tecolutla road as a necessary evil. A marked scepticism about the road bringing them increased economic opportunities was conditioned by the fact that their own experiences, and those of their forefathers, were of exploitation at the hands of land-owners and/or mestizo traders in the cabeceras.

Where such road projects did impinge upon Indians throughout the Sierra was in the demand for *faenas*. Each day given to road construction was a day lost in the field. It must be remembered, however, that *faenas* were an integral part of serrano life. Local authorities had always obliged Indian males to forfeit time from their agricultural duties for the benefit of the community. While most *faenas* would have taken place within the immediate environs, demands for work less directly relevant to the needs of the community were common. How else, for example, would the Porfiriato communication routes linking Zaragoza

to the ranches of the Zacapoaxtla elite have been built and regularly maintained? The absence of widespread Indian resistance to *faenas* suggests that they were not the burning issue they were purported to be. More accurately, perhaps, *faena* attendance in the Sierra was viewed as a necessary concession granted to external authorities to ensure that communities be left in relative peace.

All this suggests that Barrios' cacicazgo was a much less rigid structure than his image suggests. Barrios demanded obedience and stability. But these objectives were achieved through negotiation and involvement in local factional disputes. If there was a group within a community prepared to offer these basic requirements, it could expect the cacique's support. But it was not in his interest to become too involved with the community's internal affairs. Had Barrios attempted to ride rough-shod over Indian traditions and enforce a rigid regime, then Indian resistance would have been greater. As the example of Zacapoaxtla illustrates, protest against Barrios rarely originated from the Indian communities themselves. Moreover, this pattern was repeated throughout the Sierra where Barrios sought to achieve stability or to get things done.

Opposition to Barrios' influence, in Zacapoaxtla as in the Sierra as a whole, was much more the pastime of his mestizo political opponents. *Faenas* became the focus of complaints against Barrios for several important reasons. In many areas of the Sierra, Barrios insisted that *faenas* should be performed by all vecinos, not just Indians. This departure from custom was guaranteed to provoke a negative response from mestizos throughout the Sierra. In addition, it had become obvious to his political opponents that the life-blood of the cacicazgo stemmed from his promotion of regional development and progress. Neither Vega Bernal, nor Wenceslao Macip, and not even Governor Tirado could risk directly opposing such projects. To do so would have been political suicide. The most effective line of attack thus rested on the defence of



constitutional guarantees under attack from Barrios. By questioning the constitutional legitimacy of *faenas*, Barrios' opponents could attack his methods without criticising the programme itself. Even after his removal from the area, the Puebla press attacks against Barrios fell short of criticising his contribution to economic reconstruction. Comments were restricted to condemning the price that Barrios demanded for his services.

The actions of the Vega Bernals in Cuetzalan are helpful in shedding light on the wider political scene in the district of Zacapoaxtla and beyond. Their struggle for local control provides a revealing example of a group driven to rebellion, not by ideology, but by the opportunity to raise the stakes in a local factional dispute. Their decision to rebel, added a new dimension to a process of change that already existed within the area. It also provoked long-term consequences for the development of political affiliations in the district. Earlier in the Revolution, in the neighbouring district of Tetela, similar decisions were being made by the rival factions led by the Márquez family of Otlatlán and Juan Francisco Lucas of Tetela. Lucas' death and Barrios' decisive assault on the Márquez's headquarters in 1917, settled the issue in favour of the pro-Lucas faction. In Cuetzalan, the Vega Bernals proved more resilient and, as a result, the political challenge to the pro-Barrios faction survived for much longer.

Yet the factional dispute between the Vega Bernal and Flores families in Cuetzalan did not take place in isolation but was linked to the far broader issue of exactly who controlled the district of Zacapoaxtla. Control over the organisation of *faenas* was only the most obvious example of Barrios' move to usurp the traditional powers of the white elite in Zacapoaxtla. For centuries it had been they who had directed and controlled the labour potential of their Indian neighbours. Through Barrios' initiatives, they saw this privilege being spirited away by none other than an illiterate Indian.

Irrespective of the degree of racism that fuelled the initial animosity between Barrios and sectors of the Zacapoaxtla elite, his rise to regional prominence soon converted this friction into a political battle for control of the district. And unlike the majority of the Sierra, things did not fully go Barrios' way. In Claudio Tirado and his Zacapoaxtla allies, Barrios faced a formidable challenge in a region where he lacked the popular support that he had already established in the districts of Tetela and Zacatlán. Using the fortunes of Tirado's followers in Zacapoaxtla and Cuetzalan as local indicators of broader trends, it is obvious that when his opponents held influence in Puebla City, Barrios was restricted in his efforts to strengthen his grip on the district of Zacapoaxtla. During the early, formative years of Barrios' cacicazgo, Tirado held the post of senator for the Zacapoaxtla district and his local allies within the district held key political posts. (see footnote 34.) At this stage, Barrios' role in Zacapoaxtla affairs was limited to military actions that suffered obstructionism and criticism from local authorities. Later, even though José María Flores had become a prestigious figure as Director of the Zaragoza/Tecolotla road project, neither he nor Barrios were able to prevent Governor Tirado replacing the pro-Flores ayuntamiento in Cuetzalan with another more aligned to the state government. Although Barrios possessed the means to stop the state's mounted police overseeing the transition of power in the town, any attempt to do so would have strengthened Tirado's claim that Barrios was in rebellion against the state government. Only when Barrios, Toledano and others had succeeded in making Tirado's removal from office inevitable, could Barrios be said to have gained control of the district with any degree of certainty.

How many other areas of the Republic were disputed by factions such as those that fought for control of Cuetzalan? How many of the local rebellions of the 1920s were rooted in a continuation of local factionalism rather than protests against federal authority? While there were undoubtedly many groups who

fought for social equality and land reform, there were many other 'revolutionaries' who neither anticipated, nor desired reform. The Vega Bernals' fought for the Delahuertistas because, by doing so, they hoped to extend their political influence. When the military option finally ended, factionalism in Cuetzalan continued. When Miguel Vega Bernal was gunned down in 1927, he was just the latest victim of the continuing friction between two rival factions; an open wound that would fester for many years to come.

## Footnotes to Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup> Sosa, *Crónica*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, 'Montaña and Llanura', pp. 59-78.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that few serranos beyond the municipality of Zacapoaxtla are prepared to bestow the cabecera such an accolade. Many serranos, particularly those from the neighbouring district of Tetela, point out that the indigenous troops that fought in Puebla were from other areas of the Sierra and merely mustered in Zacapoaxtla prior to deployment.

<sup>4</sup> Ideological differences between the liberalism of Lucas' home town of Xochiapulco and the traditional conservatism of Zacapoaxtla, make comparisons between Lucas and Barrios difficult to apply in the district of Zacapoaxtla. Barrios came to the district with a much broader agenda than Lucas, and a distinct political rationale. Barrios quickly reduced his dependency on Xochiapulco for popular support by reaching an accommodation with the wide range of communities found within the district. Thus he lost little by maintaining a pragmatic, rather than ideological, style of leadership.

<sup>5</sup> Barrios Bonilla, *El Café en Cuetzalan*, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> For details of the clash between Dieguillo and mestizo migrants see: LaFrance & Thomson, 'Juan Francisco Lucas: Patriarch of the Sierra Norte de Puebla'; Thomson, 'Agrarian Conflict'; Thomson, 'Bulwarks of Patriotic Liberalism'; Valderrama Rouy & Ramírez Suárez, 'Resistencia étnica'. These studies show that mestizo encroachment was not always met by passive submission. Mestizo actions in Cuetzalan provoked both the indigenous raid on the town led by Lucas and the subsequent rebellion led by Agustín. This one locality demonstrates how violent reaction against mestizo encroachment contributed towards the birth of a new militarist element within Indian leadership. In Lucas' case this was to break all known colonial precedents by reaching beyond the confines of strictly localised influence.

<sup>7</sup> These families should be viewed as mestizos as although their wealth and habits may have made many Indians to view them as members of the white elite, the Zacapoaxtla elite showed little willingness to admit them into their number.

An indication of the Flores faction's economic and social control in Cuetzalan is demonstrated by the fact that, together with Ignacio María Orduña, Jesús Flores and José María Calderón had a monopoly on *aguardiente* production. As Indians were the main consumers of *aguardiente*, such a monopoly enabled these mestizo families to gain considerable influence in the lives of the many Indians who fell into debt as a result of excessive drinking. For details of *aguardiente* production see: Barrios Bonilla, *El Café en Cuetzalan*, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> This gradual marginalisation of the Nahuatl community of Cuetzalan is described in Lourdes-Arizpe, *Parentesco y economía*, p. 43. Lourdes-Arizpe's study of Zacatipan, reveals the effects of pre-revolutionary change. The inhabitants of Zacatipan once lived in Cuetzalan. When confronted by mestizo migration, they moved to nearby San Andrés Tzicuilan. Further mestizo settlement threatened Indian control of San Andrés and only by moving to a remote hilltop, where the mestizo desire for land was unlikely to reach them, did the community of Zacatipan find relative peace.

<sup>9</sup> Nickel, H.J., *Morfología social de la hacienda mexicana*, (Mexico, 1988), p. 235.

<sup>10</sup> That such tension still survives is apparent in an anecdote related to the author by a vecina of Cuetzalan in 1993:

A travelling salesman, on his way to Cuetzalan, broke his journey with an overnight stay in Zacapoaxtla. That evening he struck up conversation with the hotel owner who asked him why he was heading to Cuetzalan. The salesman replied that he was trying to persuade the traders in Cuetzalan to purchase his company's range of women's undergarments. The hotel owner gave a mirthful laugh and told the salesman that he

was wasting his time. 'The women of Cuetzalan are all ignorant Indians, they don't wear underwear.'

<sup>11</sup> Hoffmann, O., *Tierra y territorio en Xico, Veracruz*, (Xalapa, 1992). Hoffmann's study of the changes heralded by the introduction of coffee into the Coatepec district of Veracruz makes an interesting comparison with events in Zacapoaxtla.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Baudelio Rivera, 16 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

Rivera was a servant in the household of Miguel and Epigmenia Vega Bernal. He states that Miguel Vega Bernal was the local school teacher in Cuetzalan.

<sup>13</sup> Peral, M.A., *Diccionario Histórico, Biográfico y Geográfico del Estado de Puebla*, quoted by Hernández Enríquez, *Historia Moderna de Puebla*, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> AMC, Caja 126, Presidencia, 1914.

Thirteen members of a Tirado family lived in Cuetzalan in 1914.

<sup>15</sup> APGL. 1914. See letter dated 27 July 1914 addressed to General Antonio Medina.

<sup>16</sup> AML, Fomento, exp. 4, Jan. 1921.

See communiques 28 March 1921 from the state government to the municipal president of Libres regarding the invasion of Miguel Macip's farm by twenty armed men from the town of San Miguel Tenextatiloyan.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with José Flores Huidobro, 13 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

As in Zacapoaxtla, the rising dominant group in Cuetzalan society was reinforced through social and personal ties. Jesús Flores' son, José María, married the daughter of José María Huidobro. Jesús Flores was considered to be a cacique whose influence was due to his success in coffee. Reflecting the Sierra politics of his day, Flores was seen as a liberal patriarch and an anti-cleric. José María Huidobro was an officer with the *Ejército Oriente* at the battle of 5 de mayo, who later sought refuge in the rural obscurity of Cuetzalan. He, too, shared the liberal sentiments of the Flores family, yet such liberalism did not extend beyond the bounds of ethnicity. Huidobro viewed the local Indian community with contempt, and could never bring himself fully to accept the prominent position of the Indian leader, Juan Francisco Lucas.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with José Flores Huidobro, 13 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

<sup>19</sup> Upon Lucas' death in Feb. 1917, command of the Brigada Serrana was divided. Barrios controlled the Tetela district and Tranquilino Quintero's forces were deployed to Teziutlán. Rivalry between the two officers ended in 1919 when Quintero was moved to an administrative job as head of the *Corp de Inválidos*. As a consequence, Barrios assumed command of the entire Sierra Norte military sector, including the district of Zacapoaxtla.

<sup>20</sup> AMC, Caja 137, Gobernación, exp. 2, 104.

See the municipal president's four monthly report dated 31 Aug. 1918.

<sup>21</sup> AMC, Caja 140A, Presidencia, exp. 2, 33.

See letter dated 17 July 1919.

<sup>22</sup> ADN, C, 2-754, tomo 1, Vega Bernal, Salvador.

See archive note of report by Colonel Dinórin dated 16 Feb. 1918.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Salvador Vega Rodríguez, 14 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Baudelio Rivera, 16 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

<sup>25</sup> AMC, Caja 140A. Presidencia, exp. 2, 33.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Baudelio Rivera, 16 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

Señor Rivera's comments must be viewed in light of the fact that before taking up of arms, he had been employed as a *mozo* in the Vega Bernal household. It is, therefore, difficult to separate the extent to which the desire for social justice, rather than loyalty to his employer, influenced his decision to follow Salvador Vega Bernal into battle.

27 Knight, 'Caudillo and peasant', p. 49.

This view of the Vega Bernal family certainly satisfies Knight's assertion that Villistas were commonly groups whose allegiance to the cause was uncertain and superficial, and who were often local, anti-Carrancista movements merely assuming the Villista label for convenience.

28 AMZ'x, Gobernación, 27, 58/9.

See correspondence dated 29 July 1920 and 3 Aug. 1920.

29 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

See page 7 of the military report written by General Almazán dated 1 May 1923.

30 For more details refer to chapter 2.

31 ADN, C, 2-754, tomo 1, ff. 51 & 55.

32 Interview with Salvador Vega Rodríguez, 14 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

33 Hernández Enríquez, *Historia Moderna de Puebla*, p. 73.

34 AMZ'x, Gobernación, 24, 1923.

See letter dated 21 April 1923 from the municipal president of Zacapoaxtla to the state government.

AMC, Caja 153, Justicia, 189.

Copy of judicial enquiry dated 20 June 1923.

AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

See page 8 of the military report written by Juan A. Almazán dated 1 May 1923.

35 AMC, Caja 152, Gobernación, 144.

See letter dated 22 April 1923 from Victor Bernal to the state government and municipal president in Zacapoaxtla.

36 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45.

The report demonstrated the extent of the hegemony that Senator Claudio Tirado exercised: Wenceslao Macip was federal deputy; his brother, Ignacio, the *Recaudador de Rentas*; Victor Vega Bernal was municipal president of Cuetzalan; Arnulfo Ortega, cuñado of the Macips was *Juez Correccional* in Cuetzalan; Salvador Vega Bernal, who was afforded a continuing military presence in the region thanks to a fifteen man escort funded by the Ministry of War. These individuals, by family or political ties, represented a continuous chain of patronage that flowed from the state government to the municipal judge.

37 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1922. Telegrammes for January 1922.

See communique dated 22 Jan. 1922 from Barrios to the *Jefatura* in Puebla.

According to Demetrio Barrios, Vega Bernal's troops had been operating in the *tierra caliente* near Papantla and it was clear from their actions that they were engaging either in rebellion or banditry. Similar reports of rebel activity in the same area were said to have been the work of troops led by Lindoro Hernández.

38 ADN, C, 2-754, f. 127.

Vecinos of Coxquihui, Veracruz, claimed that Governor Manjarrez was supporting the Vega Bernal family. As a result, they were suffering repeated robberies, atrocities and extortion by Vega Bernal's troops.

ADN, C, 2-754, ff. 126 & 129.

José María Flores reinforced the claim of Coxquihui vecinos, stating that Vega Bernal's troops were subversives and dedicated to banditry.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1922. Telegrammes for August 1922.

See communique dated 25 Aug. 1922 from Barrios to the *Jefatura* in Puebla, informing that Rogelio Vega and others were distributing seditious public propaganda in the *tierra caliente* and in the district of Tlatlauquitepec.

39 ADN, C, 2-754, f. 14.

40 ADN, C, 2-754, ff. 291-93.

See declaration dated 9 March 1924 made by Vega Bernal to the Ministry of War.

41 ADN, C, 2-754, ff. 300-2.

42 This view was argued by Paré in *Caciquismo y poder político*, p. 42.

43 Interview with Jaime Mora, 13 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

Señor Mora reflects the prevalent belief in Cuetzalan that Zacapoaxtla objections were based upon the fear that Cuetzalan would be better suited to capitalise upon the expanding markets promised by improved communications.

44 AMZ'x, Estadística, 4, 64 (Jan. 1920).

45 AMZx, Fomento, 58, 27 (Jan. 1920).

46 *El Monitor*, no. 917, 19 Jan. 1921, p. 2.

47 *Periódico Oficial del Estado de Puebla*, 1921. no. 20, dated 17 May 1921.

48 Sosa, *Crónica*, pp. 132-35.

49 AMZ'x, Fomento, 1921, no. 1356.

50 AMZ'x. Fomento, 1921, no. 1380.

51 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45. (anexo no. 1., pp. 1-3).

52 Interview with José Flores Huidobro, 13 December 1993, Cuetzalan.

Flores suggests that his father's low opinion of the Indian serranos meant that he was very reluctant to enter into a partnership with Gabriel Barrios.

53 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45. (anexo no. 13. p. 13).

54 AGN, O-C, 701-C-9.

See telegramme sent to Obregón dated 14 Nov. 1921 and his reply dated 15 Nov. 1921.

55 AGN, O-C, 816-Z-20.

See publications entitled, *Carretera, Zaragoza - Tecolutla Hermosa Obra*, and *UNA MUESTRA DE VERDADERO PROGRESO es la carretera que se construye de Zaragoza a Texcolutla*.

56 *El Monitor*, 18 June 1921, no. 1075, p. 1.

A year later, these suspicions appear to have been confirmed when the Puebla daily, *El Monitor*, announced that the state government had granted a concession for Señor Agustín Azpiroz to establish a bus service between Zacapoaxtla and Cotzala (Cuetzalan).

ADN, C, 2-1145. f. 837, dated 6 April 1920.

57 AMZ'x, Fomento, 58, 1-20, 1920.

58 AMZ'x, Fomento, 18, 1923.

See correspondence between Victor Bernal and Moisés Macip dated 25 May 1922 and 27 May 1922.

59 AGN, O-C, 816-P-45. (Anexo 11, p. 1.)

60 ADN, C, 2-754, f. 216.

See letter dated 9 Oct. 1921 from vecinos of Cuetzalan to the *Jefe de Operaciones Militares* in Puebla.

61 *Ibid.*, f. 236.

See letter dated 20 April 1922 from Salvador Vega Bernal to the *Jefatura*.

62 ADN, C, 2-754. f. 139.

63 AGN, O-C, 701-C-9.

See letter to President Obregón dated 14 Nov. 1921.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Reports for May 1925.

See letter dated 30 April 1925 to President Calles from vecinos of Cuetzalan.

See letter dated 25 May 1925 to Gobernación from vecinos of Cuetzalan.

64 Indeed, on two occasions during the Vega Bernals' control of the Cuetzalan ayuntamiento accusations of abuses by Barrios' forces were forwarded to Barrios' military superiors. On one occasion, a delegation of Indians travelled to Puebla City in an attempt to stop the *faenas*. Upon their return, it was alleged that one of the delegates was killed by Barrios troops.

65 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Letters received November 1926.

See letter dated 18 Nov. 1926.

66 Torres Trueba, 'Faccionalismo en un municipio mexicano', pp. 772-49.

67 Lourdes-Arizpe, *Parentesco y Economía*, p. 65.

When asked for their views on a proposal to link the village by road to the national highway at Cuetzalan, one Zacatipan vecino replied skeptically: 'Who would benefit from a road that carries trucks?'

68 For a detailed explanation of the complexities of the Nahuatl's vision of the world, see: Taggart, *Nahuatl Myth and Social Structure*.

69 An excellent account of the dilemmas raised as a traditional community attempts to embrace modernity is given in; Reck, G.G., *In the Shadow of Tlaloc. (Life in a Mexican Village)*, (Harmondsworth, 1978).

70 ACP. See *Listas de diputados de Legislatura del Estado de Puebla*.

71 AMC, Caja 153, Justicia, 48.

See internal report dated 11 Oct. 1923.

72 ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 314-15.

See letter dated 22 July 1926 from vecinos of Cuetzalan to President Calles.

73 Interview with Salvador Vega Rodríguez, 12 Dec. 1993, Cuetzalan.

Interview with Francisco Landero Alamo, 10 Dec. 1993, Zacapoaxtla.

Interview with Alberto Toral, 10 Dec. 1993, Zacapoaxtla.

Miguel Vega Bernal's grave occupies a prestigious position in the principal grave yard in Zacapoaxtla, just to the right of the main church entrance.

74 AGN, O-C, 408-D-12, leg. 1.

See letter dated 4 Feb. 1926 from Tirado to Calles in which he refers to Rufino Landero's loyalty.

75 AGN, O-C, 408-P-16.

See letter dated 2 Dec. 1924 from Ignacio Macip to President Calles, referring to Barrios' forces trying to prejudice his electoral campaign.

76 AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 1.

See telegramme dated 13 Feb. 1925 from Flores and others to Calles.

77 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Reports received/sent May 1925.

See copy of letters dated 30 May 1925 and 5 June 1925 sent to Barrios by the *Jefatura*. The *defensa social* to which the letters of complaint refers, is an example of the *cuerpos voluntarios* that Barrios deployed throughout the Sierra. Falling into the general pattern, Barrios had chosen Huidobro, and later Flores, to lead the *cuerpo* as *jefe de armas*. As in many other Indian and mestizo communities, Barrios identified the leaders of the most influential faction and incorporated them within the cacicazgo.



78 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Private letters received June 1925.  
See copy of letter dated 12 June 1925 sent to Flores by Molina.

79 AGN, O-C, 701-P-9.  
See letter dated 13 June 1925 from Flores to Calles.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Telegrammes July 1925.  
See telegramme dated 23 June 1925 sent by Santa Fe.

80 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Reports received/sent August 1925.  
See copy of Tirado letter dated 4 Aug. 1925 sent to Barrios by the *Jefatura*.

AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 1.  
See telegramme dated 8 Aug. 1925 from Tirado to Calles.

81 AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 1.  
See telegramme dated 7 Aug. 1925.  
See telegramme to Calles dated 10 Aug. 1925.

82 AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 2.  
See telegramme from Tirado to Calles dated 10 Aug. 1925 and from vecinos to Calles dated 21 Aug. 1925.

83 AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 2.  
See telegramme dated 13 Aug 1925 from Ortiz to Calles; telegramme dated 13 Aug. 1925 from Flores to Calles and dated 18 Aug. 1925 from vecinos of Cuetzalan from their refuge in Casastepec to Calles.

84 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1925. Letters received October 1925.  
See letter dated 2 Oct. 1925 from Flores to Demetrio Barrios. Due to its lack of reference in any other archives, a degree of supposition regarding the nature of the plebiscite has been necessary.

85 AGN, O-C, 408-D-12.  
See telegramme dated 17 June 1926 from Amaya to Calles.

86 AGN, O-C, 408-D-12.  
See telegramme dated 23 June 1926 from Molina to Calles.

87 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Reports July 1926.  
See copy of the letters dated 9 July 1926 sent to Barrios from the *Jefatura*.

88 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Correspondence August 1926.  
See copies of various letters and telegrammes dated 16 Aug. 1926 and 17 Aug. 1926 sent by Tirado to Calles.

AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 3. (Further copy of above correspondence.)

89 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1926. Correspondence August 1926.  
See Barrios' reply to his *Jefatura* dated 30 Aug. 1926.

90 AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 3. no. 9274.  
Memorandum dated 2 Sept. 1926 from Amaya to Calles.

91 AGN, O-C, 408-P-20, leg. 3.  
See report dated 1 Sept. 1926 from Heredia to Calles.

92 In this respect, no mention has been made of Julio Lobato, one of Barrios' *jefes de armas* who operated in the Zacapoaxtla district. Lobato undoubtedly acted on Barrios' behalf during the late 1920s, becoming municipal president of Zacapoaxtla in 1930. He was not, however, a major figure in the broader political frictions that affected the district during the 1920s.

See Paré, 'Inter-ethnic and class relations', pp. 407-8, for an analysis of Lobato's subsequent role in local politics. Her pseudonym, 'Jaime Lira' plainly refers to Lobato.

## 7. Taming the tiger

The transfer of the 46th. Battalion to Mexico City in 1930 finally ended the military hold that Barrios had enjoyed throughout the Sierra for over a decade. Perhaps the writing had been on the wall two years earlier when Calles expressed his aspirations for the future role of the army in his address to the federal congress. 'Never before have I felt so entitled, as I do today, to place myself before the nation as the guarantor of the noble and disinterested conduct of the Army.'<sup>1</sup> His words perhaps reflect the point at which the reform measures promulgated by central government had decisively tipped the balance in favour of military subordination. This national shift towards the centralisation of power had inevitable repercussions in the Sierra de Puebla.

More than ever before, Barrios' political enemies were encouraged to express their grievances. At the *laborista* convention in Puebla in 1928, Vicente Lombardo Toledano reflected the changing political mood. Toledano openly attacked his former patron, alleging that Barrios so controlled the lives of serranos he had become the legal, executive and military chief of all serrano communities.<sup>2</sup> A Cuetzalan delegate spoke of the persecution of CROM members, and of large-scale fraud in which Bravo Izquierdo's state government had allowed funds destined for road projects to reach the pockets of Barrios and his cronies.

Calles' speech in the federal congress signalled that the campaign against Barrios could begin in earnest. Days later, a *La Opinión* editorial linked the dictatorship of Abraham Lucas to that of Barrios. The paper stated that the time had come for serranos to be released from decades of oppression by caciques.<sup>3</sup> This stance directly contradicted the paper's previous praise for Barrios' initiatives in the Sierra and considerable editorial space was given to clarify its

position. In acknowledging his beneficial influences, *La Opinión* now argued that the price of regional domination that Barrios demanded for such services was too high for post-revolutionary Mexico to pay.<sup>4</sup>

The political environment at both state and national levels encouraged attacks on caciques such as Barrios. Barrios' structure of prominent military and political allies began to crumble under increasing federal pressure. Those who had previously seen their complaints against Barrios ignored were suddenly given encouragement. The time was ripe for his many political enemies to round upon Barrios and jostle into position for the skirmish for local power that would succeed his removal.

For the first time in over a decade, cracks began to appear in the cacicazgo. Unions in Teziutlán, no doubt with Toledano's encouragement, acted with uncharacteristic confidence in alleging to CROM that Barrios had colluded with company owners and used force to discourage workers from organising unions.<sup>5</sup> Barrios denied all charges claiming that no such organisations existed and that the accusers were nothing more than a small group of agitators who lacked popular support. Across the Sierra in Zacatlán, Demetrio Barrios felt obliged to make a public statement denying troop interference in favour of municipal president, Angel Berrera, during the November 1928 elections.<sup>6</sup> In the past Barrios had been able to shrug off such accusations, secure in the knowledge that the prospects of being found guilty were remote. In the changed environment, however, every charge acted further to jeopardise his control of the Sierra. The vital difference was that federal authorities were now fully behind any state government measures to investigate and, where necessary, curb such abuses.

The state government did not fail to seize the initiative. Selected at a *laborista* convention that had so directly attacked Barrios, Governor Leonides Andréu Almazán wasted little time in pursuing these attacks to their logical conclusions. Federal control of Puebla politics had produced a new phenomenon: the governor could take steps to increase his constitutional jurisdiction to include the Sierra, confident in the knowledge that the federal government and, by extension, the Ministry of War would counter any moves by Barrios to oppose him.<sup>7</sup>

In his first month in office, Almazán attacked the corner-stone of the cacicazgo by declaring void the elections for Zacatlán and Teziutlán and imposing his own juntas to take over the ayuntamientos.<sup>8</sup> There could be no doubt that the state executive was determined to wrest power away from the cacique and reinstate the authority given to the governor under the state constitution. In an equally crucial move, the governor acted to undermine Barrios' grass-root network by replacing the *jefes de armas* and *cuerpos voluntarios* with similarly structured security forces of his own. The vital difference between these new groups and their predecessors was that the members were chosen by the state governor and placed under the control of municipal presidents loyal to the governor.<sup>9</sup>

Reports issued from the Sierra suggest that Barrios would not relinquish his cacicazgo without a fight. According to the provisional municipal president of Pahuatlán, Barrios' men refused to accept the installation of state-sponsored *fuerzas de seguridad pública*, had terrorised them and had replaced the ayuntamientos designated by the state government with others loyal to Barrios. President Portes Gil responded by asking the Ministry of War to ensure that stability was restored and, if all else failed, to remove Barrios' forces from the affected regions.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the governor continued to enlist *fuerzas* in the

regions perceived to be most badly affected by Barrios abuses.<sup>11</sup> Portes Gil's response is a clear indication that the federal authorities were fully behind the initiatives being taken by Governor Almazán to neutralise Barrios' power in the Sierra.

The pressure on Barrios increased with the deployment of troops of the non-serrano 45th. Battalion to Zacatlán, Teziutlán and Libres to monitor the peaceful installation of provisional ayuntamientos following the nullification of the 1929 elections. For the second year running, the governor had intervened to impose his own ayuntamiento in Zacatlán, home of the 46th. Battalion. For a time, Zacatlán had two ayuntamientos: Barrios loyalists occupied the municipal palace, while the governor's provisional ayuntamiento took up residence in a nearby hotel.

Fidel Arroyo and other faithful supporters sent appeals far and wide seeking assistance for Barrios. They asked Governor Almazán to stop illegal attempts by unelected representatives to take over the ayuntamiento. Warnings were dispatched to the President and Gobernación stating that the revolutionary pedigree of the people of Zacatlán would not allow them to stand by and see their rights snatched away by a group of reactionaries. Similar letters were sent to the federal congress accusing Governor Almazán of trying to impose reactionaries into the ayuntamiento. A plea was sent to General Almada giving details of a large public demonstration staged in the streets of Zacatlán in support of the ayuntamiento and complained of attempts to prevent it by the 45th. Battalion. Demetrio Barrios sent letters and photographs of the public demonstration to Ricardo Márquez Galindo in Mexico City, asking him to use the national press and his political power to bring the case to the attention of those with influence.<sup>12</sup>

Yet Barrios had already lost the propaganda war; Márquez Galindo's efforts were ineffective. José María Flores had already informed Barrios of the harsh attacks being made against Barrios in the national press, and the coverage in Puebla provided cold comfort. Apparently acting as the state government's official soap-box, *La Opinión* published a lengthy article defending the governor's anti-cacique initiative, and speculating on the chances of Barrios' forces continuing to intimidate the popular vote in the Sierra. The paper heralded the deployment of the 45th. Battalion to the Sierra as a victory for democracy over caciquismo, while a further article commented upon the strength of federal support for the governor's initiative.<sup>13</sup>

By March 1930, the cacicazgo had run out of options. In a letter to Márquez Galindo, Demetrio Barrios described the situation in Zacatlán:

The visitador de Administración, [Constantino Belmar] who is now acting-secretary here in Zacatlán, is trying to agitate the communities, saying that they should reject their local authorities, kill their secretaries, (who are also serving as teachers) should not pay the teachers as the state government will provide for them, and that if the officials do not leave their positions he will organise the deployment of troops to help remove them.

As you well know, the people have always been more disposed to chaos than order and only await the opportunity to follow the road to the type of disorder that has already been witnessed in Olintla and Jopala. The secretary is now persecuting those ayuntamientos who do not follow his orders, and has already imprisoned various officials including the entire *junta auxiliar* of San Francisco Ixquihiuacán and some of our friends, as well as closing several schools.

We are at a loss to where we should complain; the Standing Committee, Gobernación, the Secretary of Education, or to the President. Complaints to the governor would be futile.

As the case is urgent I would be grateful if you could inform us if we still have sympathisers in the Standing Committee or, if not, where the various communities might send their complaints in order to resist these destructive labours.<sup>14</sup>

The content and the tone of desperation conveyed within this letter depicts a cacicazgo falling apart at the seams. The foundations of the structure were being eroded by a combined political onslaught of federal and state

governments, using all the machinery at their disposal to secure their advantage. The very secretaries, local officials and teachers who had pledged loyalty to Barrios in exchange for their posts, saw their positions threatened by a force more formidable than that of their patron. Demetrio Barrios was clearly unsure of the residual political support that he and his brother enjoyed beyond the Sierra.

One of Barrios' remaining representatives in Mexico City, deputy Salustio Cabrera, endeavoured to enlist the help of an old ally, General Bravo Izquierdo, to dilute Ministry of War hostility towards Barrios. Bravo Izquierdo, then commander-in-chief of the Infantry, expressed his continued support for Barrios and pledged never to act to the detriment of his interests. He also promised to try to enlist the support of General Amaro, chief of the Ministry of War.<sup>15</sup> But times had changed, and even the help of influential friends in the Ministry could not turn the tide of subordination of the military to political objectives. The politicians held firm, and the non-serrano 45th. Battalion remained in the Sierra long after Barrios' battalion had left.

During the 46th. Battalion's years at their Mexico City barracks in San Joaquín, Tacuba, Barrios' troops were largely occupied in performing ceremonial duties. In addition, they lent support to the training programmes of the Colegio Militar and conducted their duties with such enthusiasm that they gained commendation from General Amaro. Continuing allegations of abuses by Barrios forces, who unofficially remained in the Sierra, suggest that the decision to transfer Barrios and his men to Mexico City was only partially successful in breaking up Barrios' cacicazgo.

Only with the battalion's transfer to Chiapas in 1936 did Barrios' grip on the Sierra loosen to the extent that it no longer caused anxiety among state and

federal authorities. During their three years in Chiapas, Barrios' forces assumed familiar duties: responsibility for maintaining regional security and supporting the region's communication development projects. The troops clashed several times with religious '*fanáticos*' and *agraristas*. During these operations the battalion made Mexican military history by becoming the first troops to be deployed by air. So efficiently did the battalion perform its duties that it earned commendations from President Lázaro Cárdenas. Yet there was a high price to pay for such honours: many of the Indian soldiers from the Sierra succumbed to the tropical diseases then prevalent in the region. Further tours of duty took place in Oaxaca, Veracruz, and Tlaxcala before the 46th. Battalion returned to the state of Puebla, spending time in Atlixco before being transferred to its present garrison at Tehuacán.

The battalion's move to Tlaxcala on 26 December 1940 coincided with Gabriel Barrios' recall to Mexico City in preparation for his retirement from military service in February 1941. He returned to the Sierra de Puebla and, although lacking the degree of influence he previously enjoyed, resumed an active role in local affairs. He became president of a committee to organise the renovation of the irrigation channel that his troops had built twenty years earlier; he was chairman of the Tetela district's Cattle-breeders Association; and he became the Sierra's coordinator for the programmes of adult education then promoted by the Avila Camacho brothers at both state and federal levels. For many of his years of retirement he lived in the hilltop village of Cuacuila, until ill-health persuaded him to move to his Tonalapa house in the valley below. He remained in the Sierra until the final days of his life when he was admitted to the Military Hospital in Mexico City. On 2 May 1964, Barrios died from a stroke. Two days later he was buried with full military honours at the Panteón Francés de San Joaquín, within sight of the ex-convent that had served as the battalion's headquarters during its years in Mexico City.



*What kind of cacique was Gabriel Barrios?*

Serrano folklore maintains that as Juan Francisco Lucas lay close to death he handed command of his Brigada Serrana to Gabriel Barrios with one simple piece of advice: 'In all your actions as commander, remain loyal to the federal government.' Try as his political opponents might to prove the contrary, Barrios appears to have followed this advice to the letter. When, in spring 1930, Barrios finally received orders to muster his troops for redeployment in Mexico City, there was no serious question of him disobeying. It was the underlying respect for his superiors that ultimately saved him from the fate suffered by leaders like Primo Tapia and Manuel Montes, and that would later befall Saturnino Cedillo.

Certainly, Barrios vacillated a little, asking for further time to prepare his troops for the transfer. This was nothing new, he had always sought room for manoeuvre while remaining within the bounds of federal tolerance. In fact, the delay exposed the true nature of his military support. In the precious little time before redeployment, Barrios hastily contacted his *jefes de armas* and *cuerpos voluntarios* ordering them to assemble in Zacatlán. Chaotic days followed, as old soldiers pleaded dispensation from military duty. Occasional campaigns in the vicinity of the Sierra had caused few problems, but transferral to Mexico City and unknown destinations thereafter, was too much for many. Conversely, many younger serranos rushed to take the places of the veterans, viewing this as an opportunity to broaden their horizons. The few regular officers of the battalion engaged in several days of intense training. Barrios had always sustained the image that he commanded a disciplined, professional unit; he had only a few days to transform his assembly of casual auxiliaries into a semblance of the efficient fighting force he professed to lead.

The degree to which any post-revolutionary regional leader was dependent upon, and therefore loyal to, the federal government rested on a combination of variables: military potential; sources of financial support; ideological considerations; the prevailing social and economic conditions in his area of operations. In addition, such relationships were rarely static but varied in accordance with contemporary developments. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that the underlying tenor of Barrios' relationship with his federal superiors throughout the 1920s was set during the early years of his rise to power. There is no evidence that Barrios ever seriously contradicted Lucas' advice to remain loyal to recognised federal authority. Through his ties with the Cabrera Lobato family, Barrios became closely associated with the Carrancista cause and, as a result, received large quantities of federal arms and funds to sustain his efforts in the Sierra. Federal patronage was vital to Barrios' ambitions to establish a stable power structure within his region, and at no time did his actions suggest that he waived in his support for Carranza.

The collapse of the Carrancista administration was a critical moment for the Barrios brothers. They made strenuous efforts to convince Obregón's generals of their allegiance to the *aguaprietista* cause. An indication of Barrios' vulnerability was his decision to stand down his troops and allow his military zone to be temporarily controlled by his bitter local enemy, the ex-Villista, Salvador Vega Bernal. Barrios meanwhile, issued repeated declarations of loyalty to Obregón to counter persistent rumours that he was on the point of rebelling. All this seems to suggest that the Barrios brothers were uncertain of their military strength. Lucas' influence was already on the wane, leadership of the Brigada Serrana had come fairly late in the Revolution, and Carranza's fall had prematurely interrupted Barrios' attempts to broaden his military recruitment potential beyond the traditional centres of mobilisation: Tetela and Xochiapulco. In May 1920 Barrios' network of *cuerpos voluntarios* was far

from complete. This suggests that Barrios remained dependent upon continued federal government patronage during the early years of the *Sonorense*. Given Barrios' position, it is, perhaps, a great irony that even when Obregón's generals cautioned against allowing Barrios to retain his military position, the politicians' historic ignorance of the Sierra prevented the federal government from taming Barrios before he had a chance to establish control over the territory. Thus, in 1920 with neither the federal government nor Barrios sufficiently confident to adopt a more strident position, a relationship of interdependency was established. Neither side was sufficiently confident of the extent to which they could impose their will upon the other.

This uncertainty, together with the peculiarities of Puebla politics, enabled Barrios to establish direct relationships with figures of such influence rarely accessible to military leaders of his limited status. During the same period, for example, the caciques of Pisaflores pursued their conflicting ambitions through links with more powerful caudillos: Otilio Rubio through his friendship with Saturnino Cedillo; and Otilio Villegas through his connections with ex-governor Nicolás Flores and governor Matías Rodríguez. In San Luis Potosí, despite his family's previous position of local prominence, the autonomy of the cacique, Gonzalo N. Santos, was nonetheless restricted by his need to consider the reactions of Saturnino Cedillo.<sup>16</sup> In Michoacán, Primo Tapia used his relationship with governor Múgica and later his prestige within the League of Agrarian Communities to project his message beyond the Zacapu region. The absence of a dominant figure in Puebla state politics and Barrios' lack of political ideology, meant that there was no independent intermediary through whom he was forced to negotiate. Instead, Barrios employed a more direct approach, using the structures of federal power; the Ministry of War, Presidencia, Gobernación, and SCOP, to capture the attention of national leaders.

That his sole source of access to the president was not through the Ministry of War, indicated the process by which Barrios successfully broadened his activities within the Sierra from purely military origins. During the mid-1920s, having proved his military fidelity and with various programmes of regional development in progress, Barrios reached the climax of his independence from federal control. During this period, his military chiefs protected him from criticism, and federal government departments were wary of prejudicing regional development in the Sierra by investigating allegations against Barrios too closely. Thus the 1920s was a period in which Barrios moved from a tentative hold on the Sierra to a point of considerable autonomy. His ultimate fall in 1930 should not be seen as an indication of the shallowness of the roots that sustained his empire. After all, much more powerful leaders than he would succumb to federal pressure. More accurately, it reflects the eventual ability of an authoritative figure to occupy the previous vacuum in Puebla politics. Unfortunately for Barrios, the broader political climate meant that it was too late to attempt an accommodation with Governor Leonides Almazán. Calles' speech before the federal congress in 1928 put pay to any possibility of Barrios yielding direct access to federal power in return for continued autonomy in the Sierra.

The link between Gabriel Barrios and the Indian troops under his command was a constant, vital factor in the cacicazgo's success during the 1920s. Indeed, those who went to Mexico City, and later to Chiapas and Oaxaca, were almost all Indians recruited from the mountain villages of the Sierra. Two decades later, following an assassination attempt on President Avila Camacho, the *poblano* president turned to Demetrio Barrios and the Indian soldiers of the renamed 37th. Battalion to provide a reliable presidential bodyguard. For many of those who fought in the Brigada Serrana during the Revolution, Gabriel Barrios represented continuity with the past. Barrios took

over Lucas' patriarchal role and was careful to maintain close cultural ties with his men. Throughout his life Gabriel preferred the rustic appeal of the mountains surrounding the village of Cuacuila, while his brother Demetrio chose the relative civility of life in Zacatlán. Gabriel Barrios never fully mastered the Spanish language, nor adopted the refined manners of his superiors. Yet the singular influence Barrios held over his men forced his superior officers and politicians to respect his chosen way of life.

Certainly, Barrios' relationship with his following suggests that he would not have been out of place in the ranks of the charismatic caudillos who fought in the civil and patriotic wars of Mexico's first century of Independence. Like many *ranchero* caciques of his time, Barrios' political ambitions were limited to the complete control of his locality. He did not seek to transform *serrano* society. *Juarista* liberalism had already yielded sufficient change. And this is where the Sierra was exceptional. Although Barrios was deeply committed to liberal ethics of self-determination and independence, his popular base did not possess any ideological slogan. Barrios' power derived from the Indian *serranos* who followed him into battle; only an Indian patriarchal figure could fulfil the role expected of such a leader. Many mestizo caudillos occupied similar intermediary roles elsewhere. But in the Sierra de Puebla, ethnic considerations and historic precedents narrowed the options available.

Once his military position was secure, Barrios' understanding of *serrano* society enabled him to establish a strong network of clients. By acknowledging a community's pre-existing social structure, whether mestizo or Indian, Barrios sought to implant his authority while causing minimum disruption. Reflecting the diversity of ethnic and social circumstances in the Sierra, no two communities were approached in the same manner. The *cacicazgo* was both pragmatic and flexible in its application at the grass-roots level. Discipline and

organisation were an essential part of the cacicazgo, but these were employed more in connection with external issues, such as military campaigns and the construction of effective communications, than the daily lives of serrano communities.

It was his readiness to embrace new methods of control that defies Barrios' categorisation as one of a dying breed of traditional caudillos. His extensive system of telecommunications was a sign of a more ambitious project to open up the Sierra by the construction and maintenance of roads. Such projects sustained the flow of federal goodwill long after the pacification of the country had diminished the need for Barrios' military services. Through his contacts, Barrios penetrated the corridors of bureaucracy in Mexico City and convinced successive presidents that his presence in the Sierra was vital to post-revolutionary reconstruction.

Yet the benefits of Barrios' interest in regional economic regeneration went further than securing his position with the federal authorities. Barrios needed to broaden his appeal at the local level beyond his ability to provide military protection. He had to satisfy the expectations of his supporters. Ivonne Barrios Kuri has two vivid images of her grandfather during the last years of the cacique's life. She recalls a stern man who curtailed her holiday in Cuacuila because she had ridden his favourite horse without permission. She also remembers him as an old man who spent hours on the verandah of his house in Cuacuila listening to the problems brought to him by serrano Indians from far and wide. Always conversing in *nahuatl*, he patiently listened, and the campesinos would solemnly nod in revered silence as Barrios prescribed the solution to their particular problem. Subjective memories perhaps, yet his grand-daughter confirms Barrios' image as 'a firm man who did much good for his people'.<sup>17</sup>

It is this very ambiguity that suggests the need to reappraise our understanding of the role post-revolutionary leaders played in such issues as agrarian reform and rural development. While the evidence identifies the existence of both agrarian and traditional leaders, Barrios' actions suggest the existence of a different type who, in pursuit of self-preservation, developed a distinct response to post-revolutionary reform.

The cynical adoption of a revolutionary stance in order to gain popular support was, of course, nothing new. Yet in attempting to introduce initiatives to improve the lives of the serranos upon whom he depended, Barrios pursued a policy that corresponded with his own convictions that, in turn, had been shaped by historical precedents. Just as Lucas had sustained his image as the 'Patriarch of the Sierra' by responding to the needs of his supporters, so Barrios was required to accept the responsibilities that accompanied his inherited legitimacy. Whether a serrano had problems with a neighbour; an authority with vecinos who refused to do *faenas*; or an entire community plagued by banditry and indiscipline, all came to Cuacuila in search of a solution. By organising the building of schools, irrigation channels, improving water supplies and encouraging agricultural improvements, Barrios maintained the same form of benevolent patronage that Lucas had employed to protect serranos from enforced conscription and *desamortización*.

In this way, circumstances combined to produce a regional cacique who fiercely resisted agrarian reform, but who nonetheless adopted measures to improve the lives of campesinos. Across the border in Veracruz, the agrarian governor, Adalberto Tejeda, had belatedly realised that it was insufficient merely to provide campesinos with land. Campesino grievances identified the need for structural reform to provide access to credit, education, markets and

technology.<sup>18</sup> In the Sierra de Puebla, the 'enemy of the campesino' was already bringing such reforms to fruition. The vital difference was that whereas Tejeda sought to promote such reforms through state initiatives, Barrios' projects relied upon the serrano people helping themselves. Thus, local groups began to create agrarian co-operatives, and committees for sanitation and water provision, which would then attract state support rather than the other way around. Such an approach was inherent in a region that had a proud history of independence. By reflecting the peculiar characteristics of the Sierra, Barrios forestalled the time when state organisations would appropriate the machinery of government within the Sierra. Patronage continued to flow through a native, Indian patriarch rather than through local and regional agrarian committees such as those found on the *altiplano*.

Perhaps too much emphasis has previously been placed upon viewing local and regional power struggles as scaled-down versions of the broader conflict between traditional and modern power structures, or *agrarista* and *laborista* tendencies. Such issues did not exist in the Sierra. Instead, the region's history and socio-economic circumstances called for a leader who encompassed features found at both extremes of the dichotomy: a traditional patriarch who, nonetheless, used the formal bureaucratic structures of the Revolution to distribute patronage of a type more usually attributed to agrarian caudillos.

It is, perhaps, for this reason that the image of Gabriel Barrios varied in accordance with the perspective of those who knew him. For many white elite and mestizos, he was a necessary evil in their ambitions for political advancement: for many Nahuas, he was a benevolent patriarch possessing mystical qualities. He was both a charismatic, traditional military cacique, and a modernising bureaucrat who used his contacts to his advantage. In this



respect, the Barrios cacicazgo was not unique. Pansters' study of Puebla politics in the late 1930s and 1940s, concludes by describing *avilacamachismo* as a personalistic system sustained by the institutional structure.<sup>19</sup> Enrique Márquez describes the pragmatism of Gonzalo Santos in San Luis Potosí as a cacique who moved to claim the political void left unoccupied by others.<sup>20</sup> A decade earlier in the Sierra de Puebla, a similar space existed between the need to respect Indian traditions while demonstrating loyalty to the federal government. Within the broad spectrum of post-revolutionary caudillismo there was room for opportunists, *hombres líquidos*,<sup>21</sup> who possessed sufficient foresight to adapt their style of leadership to reflect the changing environments and the individual circumstances of their territory.

## Footnotes for Chapter 7

<sup>1</sup> Dulles, Yesterday in Mexico, p. 386.

<sup>2</sup> *La Opinión*, 6 Oct. 1928, no. 1625, pp. 1 & 6.

<sup>3</sup> *La Opinión*, 13 Sept. 1928, no. 1603, p. 3.

Infact, if Barrios had inherited a cacicazgo from anyone it was Juan Francisco Lucas, not his son Abraham. Perhaps the paper intentionally allowed the confusion to arise in order to tarnish the political position of Abraham Lucas.

<sup>4</sup> *La Opinión*, 6 Oct. 1928, no. 1625, pp. 1 & 6.

<sup>5</sup> ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 381-83, 388-89, 402-3.

See letters from CROM. dated 7 Nov. 1928, 15 Nov. 1928 and 20 Dec. 1928.

<sup>6</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1928. Letters for December 1928.

See declaration dated 13 Dec. 1928. The complaint was lodged by the 'Pro-Andréu Almazán' group in Puebla City.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929. Documents for February 1929.

Letter dated 25 Feb. 1929 from the municipal president of Zacatlán to Demetrio Barrios informing Barrios of the imposition.

Although Barrios contested the decision, his candidate, Becerra, did not become municipal president and a provisional ayuntamiento under the presidency of Vicente González was installed on 20 Feb. 1929. Barrios may have been somewhat placated as the ayuntamiento included several of his supporters: Alberto Galindo, Rodolfo Arroyo and Hermilio Barrios.

<sup>7</sup> This move repeats that of the 1884/5 period, when Méndez and the Montaña movement were pushed aside as federal interests ensured the imposition of an outside governor, Rosendo Márquez.

<sup>8</sup> AML, Gobernación, exp. 10, 1929.

See letter dated 15 Feb. 1929 from the state government to the municipal president of Libres.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929. Documents for February 1929.

See letter dated 25 Feb. 1929 from the provisional municipal president to Demetrio Barrios informing him of the state government's move.

BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929. Letters for May 1929.

A letter dated 8 May 1929 from Eliseo W. Domínguez to Demetrio Barrios refers to some of the voting irregularities that were identified in the Sierra. These included the substitution of one name for another - an alteration all the more easily detected by the use of different coloured ink!

<sup>9</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1929. Letters sent/received May 1929.

One of the first *jefes de armas* to receive notice from governor Almazán that he and his forces were to be disbanded was Estéban Islas of Honey, Pue.

See letters dated 2 May 1929 and 12 May 1929 from the state government to Estéban Islas.

<sup>10</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1930. Correspondence for January 1930.

See letter dated 26 Jan. 1930 from the *Jefatura* in Puebla to Barrios.

ADN,C, 2-1145, f. 344.

This document contains a copy of the complaint sent to the President by Victor C. Valderrabano, municipal president of Pahuatlán.

<sup>11</sup> BLC.RHAM. Caja 1930. Correspondence for January 1930.

See letters dated 22 Jan. 1930 and 23 Jan. 1930 from the *Jefatura* to Barrios giving notice of the governor's actions in various communities within the district of Huauchinango.

12 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1930. Telegrammes for February 1930.  
See telegrammes dated 14 Feb. 1930, 15 Feb. 1930 and 21 Feb. 1930.

13 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1930.  
See correspondence date 18 Feb. 1930 between José María Flores and Barrios regarding adverse press coverage in Mexico City.

A series of articles relating to Barrios' cacicazgo were published in *La Opinión*, particularly between 19 Feb. 1930 and 28 Feb. 1930.

14 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1930.  
See letter dated 31 March 1930 from Demetrio Barrios to Ricardo Márquez Galindo.

15 BLC.RHAM. Caja 1930.  
See letter dated 6 March 1930 from Bravo Izquierdo to Barrios.

16 Márquez, 'Gonzalo N. Santos', p. 389; Falcón, *Revolución y caciquismo*, pp. 197-98.

17 In the many interviews conducted in the Sierra de Puebla with former allies and enemies of the Barrios family, almost all expressed this as the characteristic that most accurately described Gabriel Barrios.

18 Fowler, *Agrarian Radicalism*, pp. 104-5.

19 Pansters, *Politics and Power in Puebla*, p. 168.

20 Márquez, 'Gonzalo N. Santos', p. 391.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 389.

# APPENDICES

**APPENDIX I**  
**A JUAN FRANCISCO LUCAS.**  
**PATRIARCA DE LA SIERRA DE PUEBLA.**

Débil mi voz, para cantar al hombre  
 que en su cívico amor, buscó lo excelso;  
 débil, la rima, de mi pobre verso  
 para poder, glorificar su nombre...

Nombre que vá, por montes y llanuras  
 en la Sierra de Puebla, como un grito  
 que intentase horadar el infinito,  
 y clavarse en el grise, de las alturas.

Nombre que en rayos de fulgor se enmarca,  
 aureolado en los años, por la gloria  
 que lo guarda en los fastos de la historia  
 con dos sólas palabras: 'El Patriarca'.

'Juan Francisco Lucas'. Gloria inmensa  
 de Zacapoaxtla, que se yergue y sube,  
 cual si quisiera desgarrar la nube  
 para quedar, sobre el azul suspensa.

Aquí, donde despeinan los pinares  
 sus crenchas lacias, que sacude el viento,  
 y el tzentzontle, desgrana somnoliento  
 la cascada en cristal, de sus cantares.

Aquí, donde recorta la montaña  
 se perfil, limitando el horizonte;  
 y deja ver, el empinado monte,  
 el hosco pico de su cresta hurafia.

Aquí, en Comaltepec, la rubia aurora  
 meció su cuna, bajo el sol de junio;  
 y el destino lo lleva al plenilunio  
 marcando el alto, en la precisa hora.

Y, sus risas de niño, cantarinas,  
 van por lomas, oteros, y breñales,  
 haciendo estremecer los pastizales  
 para luego perderse en las colinas.

Y le vió corretear el arroyuelo,  
 trepar, en las auroras matinales  
 al Cerro gris azul de - Los Cristales -  
 siguiendo de las aves el revuelo.

Y su carácter forja la montaña,  
 la solemne quietud, de la cañada;  
 su púber ansia, sin querer, atada  
 con el diario bregar, de la cabaña.

Llora la Patria en su dolor convulsa,  
ante el ultraje vil, del extranjero;  
el pueblo lucha, denodado y fiero,  
lleno de ardor, de natural repulsa.

Rasga la plaza, de la poblana sierra,  
el horrendo fragor de la metralla;  
el ansia vibra, el patriotismo estalla,  
y Marte pasa, pregonando: 'guerra'.

Y Juan Francisco Lucas, alza ufano,  
del Plan de Ayutla la triunfal bandera;  
y la Sierra se vuelve intensa hoguera,  
queriendo ahogar, al invasor profano.

Y el indio recio, de semblante arisco,  
que retaba el furor de las tormentas,  
corre a enfrentarse a las batallas cruentas,  
o a sofocar, el brote levantisco.

Soldado, General, no importa el grado;  
dispuesto se halla, con el rifle en mano,  
a defender, el Suelo Mexicano,  
para él, primero... para él 'sagrado'.

Y sin temor, se lanza a la batalla  
que se libra el Fuerte de Loreto;  
y a la muerte se encara en franco reto  
con un valor, que en temerario raya.

Después... más tarde, cuando ya la Oliva  
ciñe a la Patria, cuando el Angel vela  
para guardar la Paz, allá en Tetela,  
sus restos cubre, gratitud votiva...

Y alza el tiempo plegadizo puente  
abriendo paso a su ganada gloria;  
y eleva un monumento a su memoria  
la fe del pueblo, que lo aclama ardiente.

- 0 -

Juan Francisco Lucas: A tí se llegan  
hombres y niños del Solar que es tuyo;  
hay en sus almas, verdadero orgullo,  
cuando la ofrenda de su amor te entregan.

Están hoy ante tí, los sucesores  
de muchos, que al austriaco combatieron;  
hijos de aquellos, que cayendo vieron  
ondear la Enseña de los tres colores.

Están hoy ante tí, del Internado  
los niños, que te honran y te aman;  
los niños y los hombres que te llaman:  
'Patriarca'. 'Su patriarca venerado'.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **EVOLUTION OF THE BRIGADA SERRANA**

- Until 31 Dec. 1919                      - Brigada Serrana
  
- 1 Jan. 1920 - 2 Feb. 1921           - 'Serrano de Puebla'  
   Infantry Regiment
  
- 3 Feb. 1921 - 4 March 1921       - 54th. Battalion
  
- 5 March 1921 - 4 Aug. 1921       - 8th. Auxiliary Battalion
  
- 5 Aug. 1921 - 31 Dec. 1921       - 59th. Auxiliary Battalion
  
- 1 Jan. 1922 - 7 July 1942          - 46th. Battalion

### **MILITARY CAREER OF GABRIEL BARRIOS CABRERA**

- 6 June 1913           - 2nd. Captain and head of the Cuacuila  
                                 Company of the Brigada Serrana.
  
- 8 July 1914           - Captain with same responsibilities.
  
- 29 Sept. 1915       - Major and head of the Juan N. Méndez  
                                 Battalion of the Brigada Serrana.
  
- 15 Aug. 1917       - Lieutenant Colonel and head of the  
                                 Brigada Serrana.
  
- 27 April 1920       - Colonel and head of the 'Serrano de  
                                 Puebla' Infantry Regiment.
  
- 27 Nov. 1920       - Brigadier General with same  
                                 responsibilities.
  
- 16 Nov. 1940       - General of the Brigade.

**Source. ADN, C, 2-1145, ff. 1374-46.**

## APPENDIX III

### 1917 FEDERAL CONSTITUTION

#### *Article 76*

The exclusive powers of the Senate are:

v) To declare, whenever the constitutional powers of a State have disappeared, that the condition has arisen for appointing a provisional governor, who shall call elections in accordance with the constitutional laws of the said State. The appointment of a governor shall be made by the Senate from a list of three proposed by the President of the Republic, with the approval of two thirds of the members present, and during adjournments, by the Permanent Committee, according to the same rules. The official thus appointed cannot be elected constitutional governor in the elections held pursuant to the call which he issues. This provision shall govern whenever the constitution of a State does not make provision for such cases.

vi) To settle political questions which may arise between the powers of a State, whenever any of them shall apply to the Senate for the purpose, or whenever, by reason of such questions, the constitutional order shall be interrupted through a conflict of arms. In this event the Senate shall declare its decision, subjecting itself to the General Constitution of the Republic and to that of the State.

The law shall regulate the exercise of this and of the foregoing powers.

**Source: O.A.S., Washington D.C., 1961**



# UNA MUESTRA DE VERDADERO PROGRESO

## es la carretera que se construye de Zaragoza a Tecolútla.

El progreso, en rápida y portentosa carrera, recorre todos los ámbitos del mundo y cual heraldo de la buena nueva, anuncia con las notas de su clarín sonoro, la evolución y la revolución de nuestras costumbres. Los pueblos todos rinden ante él, su admiración y con mas o menos rapidez, introducen en su vida las reformas anunciadas, convencidos de sus prodigios.

Pero por desgracia, han existido y aun existen seres retrógrados que en todas épocas han sido la rémora para la realización de las reformas civilizadoras.

Ya es un grupo de barqueros que destruye a Dionicio Papín el primer buque de vapor, fruto de su imaginación creadora, por que creé que este invento traerá la ruina de su trabajo.

Ora son campesinos analfabetas que se oponen, aun con las armas, a que sus propiedades sean atravesadas por el ferrocarril y obstruccionan así la labor de Jorge Stéphenon; o bien individuos que aconsejan, no se use la luz eléctrica por ser invento del diablo(?); y así podríamos seguir citando ejemplos de las oposiciones infundadas que ha tenido el progreso humano, pero sin ir lejos tenemos uno aquí mismo, en nuestra región serrana, de un grupo de individuos que vociferando atropellos (que no existen,) se opone por cuantos medios están a su alcance a la realización de una obra tan importante cual es la de abrir la carretera "ZARAGOZA-TECOLÚTLA."

No importa sin embargo esto; el progreso se impone y mal que les pese, la obra será terminada y pronto tendremos la satisfacción de ver nuestras agrestes serranías recorridas por los autos, y entonces esta región tan rica, pero no bien explotada por la falta de fáciles vías de comunicación, entrará en una era de prosperidad y de grandeza y no será difícil que veamos a esos mismos individuos obstruccionistas, ser los primeros en aprovechar los beneficios de tan importante mejora.

Así pues, no hay que desmayar, las grandes obras necesitan grandes esfuerzos; unámonos los nuestros en uno solo y veremos con agrado, coronada con el éxito la empresa comenzada.

### El progreso de los pueblos es el reflejo del de sus habitantes.

Zacapoaxtla, 15 de Noviembre de 1921.

Prof. Elfrain F. Bonilla.

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